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CHRISTOPHER SMITH

## *Supernaturel* Revisited

Henri De Lubac's Theology  
of the Supernatural  
in Contemporary Theology

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# SEPARATA

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Universidad de Navarra  
Facultad de Teología

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Henri De Lubac's Theology of the Supernatural  
in Contemporary Theology

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## Presentation

**Resumen:** En esta tesis, se explora el desarrollo del debate acerca de lo sobrenatural según Henri de Lubac. Primero, se explica el pensamiento incluido en sus obras, con particular atención a *Surnaturel*. Segundo, se da un panorama sintético de cómo se ha contado el debate y qué cuestiones surgieron en manuales de teología, historias, diccionarios, enciclopedias, y artículos en el período 1980 a 2010. Particular énfasis se da al mundo teológico-académico europeo. Tercero, se cuenta un nuevo debate entre teólogos de lengua inglesa, particularmente John Milbank y Lawrence Feingold. Vemos cómo la relación entre la naturaleza del hombre y la acción de Dios en él se desenfoca cuando se plantea la cuestión en términos de deseo natural, y cómo un análisis del intelecto en el hombre puede ser útil para entender esta relación.

**Palabras clave:** sobrenatural; De Lubac; gracia.

**Abstract:** In this thesis, I explore the development of the debate on the supernatural according to Henri de Lubac. First, I look at the thought included in his works, with particular attention to *Surnaturel*. Second, I give a synthetic view of how the debate has been told and what questions have arisen in theology manuals, histories, dictionaries, encyclopedias and articles in the period from 1980 to 2010. I have given particular emphasis to writers in the European academic theological world. Third, I recount a new debate between English language theologians, particularly John Milbank and Lawrence Feingold. We see how the relationship between the nature of man and the action of God in him loses focus when considered in terms of natural desire, and how an analysis of intellect in man can be useful for understanding the relationship without ending up in dead ends.

**Key words:** supernatural; De Lubac; grace.

In 1946, A French Jesuit named Henri de Lubac published a work entitled *Surnaturel*. This book sought to provide a history of the term and the concept. In a brief conclusion, he made the argument that, practically since the time of St Thomas Aquinas, theologians, most particularly after Cajetan, had misunderstood the relationship between human nature and God. The ascent of the category «supernatural» in theology had created a two-planed existence for man in which nature and supernatural did not really affect each other. De Lubac opined that this separation was at the root of the secularization of society, and was not itself traditional.

The thesis occasioned a storm of controversy in the theological world, as it seemed to question the whole way Catholic theology was done. Eminent and well-known theologians launched a devastating critique of de Lubac, and, it also appears, were behind his removal from teaching. Yet, his friend Étienne

Gilson would claim that his scholarship could not be doubted. By the eve of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5), the theological climate had changed considerably, to such an extent that his thought on the supernatural, although it continued to be questioned in some part by such theologians as Giuseppe Colombo and Juan Alfaro, became the accepted position on the supernatural question.

In 1965, he published two works, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* and *Le mystère du surnaturel*, in which he recasts his thesis to account for the concern of *Humani generis*. Finally, in 1980 he published a little work, *Petite catéchèse sur nature et grâce*, in which he argues that the nature/supernatural dialectic should be replaced by one of nature and grace. In the course of this work we have seen the importance of this work where De Lubac's position is much more nuanced.

The debate over the supernatural was one of the great theological debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which directly affected the way theology was done. Many of the questions which came about in the debate are still open today, such as what St Thomas Aquinas meant by natural desire for God and the value of the concept of pure nature, a theological category which De Lubac dismissed as useless.

Now, with some distance from the passion with which the original debate was fought, numerous studies have appeared elucidating the legacy and the limits of De Lubac's position. As there is now an ample literature on this topic, it seemed opportune to study it in this thesis.

Here we try to closely study the history of the debate, determining the precise points of discussion. But we also wish to look at how the debate has been recounted and how it has been explained, particularly in manuals of theology. We also examine the work of some well-known theologians who have drawn out conclusions based on their reading of the debate, developing other perspectives and correcting some aspects of it. At the same time, the debate has come back to life unexpectedly, as we shall see, in a very much changed context, that of the new school of Radical Orthodoxy.

To prepare this thesis, I have read everything De Lubac has written on the supernatural problematic. I then studied how the story of that debate has been told, and how conclusions based on the debate appear in manuals, histories of theology, dictionaries, encyclopedias and articles. Finally, I have also studied the most important works that re-propose and develop further the original questions that remain.

The complexity of the discussion and its many facets, as well as its intricate history, makes a linear analysis of all of the numerous themes associated with the supernatural problematic difficult. It is necessary to define each position with great carefulness and precision. But we hope to provide a sustainable *status quaestionis* on the supernatural question as proposed by De Lubac as presented in the here and now.

This history has two main periods: the first, which is from the publication of *Surnaturel* to shortly before Vatican II, that of the original debate; and second, after a period of almost complete silence, a second period from 1980 to 2011, where the original debate has been investigated and re-envisioned.

My thesis is organized in the following manner: an introduction, three parts with two chapters and a conclusion each, and a general conclusion.

## PART ONE

The first part is entitled *De Lubac and the Debate over the Supernatural in the First Half of the 20th Century*.

1) Chapter One: *De Lubac and Surnaturel*. This is a biographical introduction to De Lubac which recounts his theological career and explores his work on the natural desire for God and the supernatural, not only in his famous 1946 book, but afterwards as well.

2) Chapter Two: *The Debate over Surnaturel*. I note that the publication of *Surnaturel* occasioned much criticism, such as that of Garrigou-Lagrange, Charles Boyer and Marie-Rosaire Gagnebet. Colombo provided the first history and evaluation of the debate and Alfaro provided a historical survey of the supernatural question since the time of Cajetan, with particular reference to De Lubac. I would find in my research that these two thinkers, who provide a well-informed, balanced and profound critique, would largely be ignored by later writers.

## PART TWO

The second part is entitled *Theologians Revisit the History of the Debate and Questions Raised By It 1980-2010*.

3) Chapter Three: *Theologians Confront the History over the Debate on Surnaturel 1980-2010*. In this chapter, we see how the debate over the supernatu-

ral has been told in histories of theology, manuals and articles. Many of them do not add anything particularly new, but limit themselves to explaining a few topics which had already been well established. Among the most interesting articles which recount and evaluate the debate, we find the work of Flick-Alzseghy, Ladaria and Nicolas. We also look at the work of Forte, Komonchak, Berzosa, Sesboüé, Mettepenningen, Kerr, Illanes, Sayés and Lorda. The work of Susan Wood, Galván and Ladaria suggests that the key to interpreting De Lubac on the supernatural is through the hermeneutic of paradox. In this chapter we also explore the rise of a new discipline called theological anthropology, which can be considered a fruit of that debate.

4) Chapter Four: *Themes in the Theology of the Supernatural After De Lubac 1980-2010*. As I read through the literature on the history of the debate, I came across numerous themes which merited further study, because they had to deal with historiography of the debate. For example, some authors highlighted as part of their recounting the history of the debate the weaknesses and strengths of the Thomistic account of nature and grace.

I look at several unique voices from the readings who, in their discussion of the history, indicate several themes that I think are worth exploring further: Kerr and Komonchak's reading of the debate in terms of a political struggle in French society, Sayés on the connection between De Lubac and liberation theology, and Cardinal Siri's critique in his 1980 book *Gethsemane*.

### PART THREE

The third part is entitled *Theologians Re-Propose Certain Systematic Aspects of the Supernatural Question 1980-2010*.

5) Chapter Five: *Re-Proposing Aspects of the Supernatural Question in Theological Journals 1980-2010*. I examine several important themes that are part of the supernatural question: pure nature, original sin and *pura naturalia*, and the theory of the dual ends of man. I recall Donneaud's proposal for a recovery of Marie-Joseph Guillou's critique of De Lubac, as well as the critique of Cardinal Ruini, who usefully examines the interface between De Lubac and Thomism. We pay particular attention here to a colloquium held in 2000 by the journal *Revue thomiste* in Toulouse, which explored the possibility of a synthesis between the thought of De Lubac and Thomistic positions on the

supernatural. We also look at the work of Louvain professor Vanneste, who has brought his own sometimes surprising personal perspectives to these same questions.

6) Chapter Six: *Anglophone Theologians Engage De Lubac for the 21st Century*. In 2001, Lawrence Feingold published a dissertation in which he concludes that, while De Lubac was right to address the fact that contemporary man had lost the sense of the supernatural, he was wrong to look for it in nature, in the *élan* of the spirit. His work was severely criticized by John Milbank, the progenitor of a new school of theology called *Radical Orthodoxy*, which held that De Lubac was not courageous enough in accepting the logical consequences of his thought on the natural desire for God. I examine here several commentators on that debate, particularly Oakes, Long, and Reinhard Hütter.

The greatest contribution of this present work seems to be the detailed study of all of those aspects which can provide a relatively complete *status quaestionis* on the supernatural, both about the original debate as well as its contemporary situation. Each part of the work presents its own conclusions, and in the final conclusion we present more general ones based on the study.

The Conclusion is composed of two parts: the first is a list of conclusions drawn from my study; the second is a list of problems identified during my study which merit further reflection.

It is clear that the publication of *Surnaturel* in 1946 was a watershed in theological history. It contributed dramatically to a change in theological method and left many open questions.

Henri De Lubac went from being a theologian suspected by the most recognized authorities in theology, who saw him against the backdrop of the Modernist crisis, to one of the principal theologians of the 20th Century and one of the chief protagonists of the Second Vatican Council.

This fact has tended to deform a proper historical perspective on the debate. What was flatly rejected in the 1950s came to be accepted *prima facie* in the 1970s, almost without any objection. In the theological literature of the period 1980-2010, De Lubac appears as the principal figure in the supernatural debate of the 20th century. The critiques of those such as Garrigou-Lagrange, Boyer and Gagnebet, appear as little more than caricatures. Even those who still wished to maintain as much of the scholastic Thomistic framework as possible were eager to find a way to integrate some of De Lubac's intuitions.



Yet, much of what came from the debate has still not been satisfactorily resolved. Sesboué notes that De Lubac was always on the defensive, charging that his work was misunderstood, but without ever answering the principal objections, even those of thinkers such as Alfaro and Colombo. Here we see the true value of De Lubac's *Petite catéchèse*, which, even though it is considered a minor work, remains the French Jesuit's most successful one. Unfortunately, like the work of Alfaro and Colombo, it has been largely ignored.

Still today we must continue to ask the same questions that piqued De Lubac's curiosity: if the desire for God belongs to the natural order, how can we salvage the sovereignty and free will of God? If, as *Humani generis* states, God could have created man and not destined him to the beatific vision, how can we say that man has a natural desire for God, a desire which would then be frustrated?

Before attempting to answer these questions, there must be a careful analysis of the thought of St Thomas on natural desire, because it has been the source of numerous misunderstandings.

Ironically, in the same period, many theologians began to believe that the supernatural had become irrelevant as a theological category. What had dominated De Lubac's thought for his entire theological career virtually disappeared.

Feingold's 2001 dissertation, which is a highly specialized study on the desire for God in St Thomas, has caused the question to be re-opened in the English-speaking world, particularly thanks to its engagement by Radical Orthodoxy. Yet this debate, like the original debate, suffers from displacement of the important issues in understanding the supernatural problematic.

When St Thomas speaks of the desire for God, he thinks not in terms of an affective inclination, but in the very structure of intellect, which, because it is made to know, is open to all that can be known, including the divine essence. In this sense, the intellect is radical openness to the infinite, and God Himself, who is most knowable. When De Lubac writes of the *élan d'esprit* in the conclusion of *Surnaturel*, this is what he is after, but in doing so, he passes from the ontological order in which St Thomas proposes the idea, to the psychological, in which, for example, St Augustine proposes it. «You have made us for you, LORD, and we are restless until we rest in you.» It is here that we can truly begin to see where the supernatural problematic arises, as well as the manifold possibilities for misunderstanding.

The excerpt which follows is taken from chapter 6 of the thesis, entitled *Anglophone Theologians Engage De Lubac for the Twenty-First Century*. It focuses on the debate in the English-speaking world over De Lubac's thought principally in the work of Feingold and Milbank.

\* \* \*

The theological faculty at the University of Navarre have been very helpful and have provided a beautiful environment for theological reflection and research. My most profound gratitude goes to my *Doktorvater*, Don Juan Luis Lorda. His breadth of vision, profundity of learning, and ability to steer me in the right direction have been invaluable. I count myself privileged indeed to have drawn from the well of his wisdom and expert guidance.

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1. The sheer volume of literature produced in the original debate on the supernatural, as well as in the years from 1980 to 2010 is such that the student of this fascinating period in theological history can easily be overwhelmed. To assist the scholar in identifying the most important and useful texts for studying the supernatural debate, we provide here an annotated bibliography.
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## Anglophone theologians engage De Lubac for the twenty-first century

As the 2000 Colloquium at the Institut Catholique in Toulouse on de Lubac and the supernatural came to a successful conclusion, little did its participants know that the fraternal dialogue that characterized their conference would soon be followed by a debate the proportions of which can compare to what happened after the initial publication of *Surnaturel*. As the interventions were prepared for a double issue of *Revue thomiste* to appear the next year, an American student was preparing a doctoral defense that would spark this renewed debate. While many theologians had long cast the supernatural question and De Lubac into the dustbin, contemporary Thomists of the Toulousian School, and the heirs apparent of the *nouvelle théologie* in the so-called *Communio* school of theologians, had come to a *modus vivendi* which integrated much of De Lubac's thought into mainstream Catholic theology. Lawrence Feingold, who prepared his thesis under Alfonso Chacón (b. 1952) and Stephen Brock (b. 1957), at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome, was about to challenge the delicate *status quo* in a way which for many entered the stage of theological drama as a character foreign to the developing plot line, a ghost of theologies past, and irresistible to watch.

Feingold's work was originally published by Apollinare Studi in Rome and later in a second edition published by Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University<sup>1</sup>. Far from being an obscure doctoral dissertation gathering dust on the shelves of a Roman pontifical university library, this work became the first shot in a war which developed over the natural desire to see God in St Thomas. As we will see, Feingold presents a radical critique of De Lubac's theology of the supernatural. Such a critique did not sit well with many in the theological academy, but least of all with the theologians associated with a developing school of theology in the English-speaking world called Radical Orthodoxy. This movement, which in many ways takes De Lubac as its inspiration, can be

described as being at the pole opposite Feingold on the supernatural question. The founder of the Radical Orthodoxy movement, John Milbank (b. 1952), Professor of Religion, Politics and Ethics at the University of Nottingham in England, responded to Feingold's 490 page tome with a 117 page booklet seeking to vindicate De Lubac<sup>2</sup>.

Both the initial provocation and the reaction have produced an entire body of articles, some of which will also be considered here<sup>3</sup>. One striking quality of this recent genre of theological literature –the revision of the theology of the supernatural by way of the combat between Feingold and Milbank– is that, until now, all of its interlocutors have been part of the English speaking world. The original debate over De Lubac's *Surnaturel* began with the French and later expanded to the world of the Roman pontifical university system, only much later being noticed and taken up by the theological academy in other countries. This debate began with an American and an Englishman, and as of yet remains virtually contained within Anglophone academia<sup>4</sup>.

A second notable characteristic of this discussion is the religious perspective to which its participants belong. The debate over *Surnaturel* took place almost entirely among Roman Catholics. Only much later, was it noticed by non-Roman Catholic Christians and, even then, mostly by way of observation, rather than participation.

The last salient feature of this debate is the state of life of its participants. In the original debate, Dominican and Jesuit clerics lined up on both sides of the debate, with secular clergy and priests from other religious communities to follow. In contrast, the vast majority of those who have entered the arena in this fight are lay theologians, and also include notable female theologians as well<sup>5</sup>.

These three characteristics alone reflect how the environment of theological discussion has changed dramatically since 1946. The weight of theological discourse on the supernatural has shifted from Continental Europe to the Anglo-Saxon world, reflecting the greater visibility of English language and culture in the larger theological world. The opening of the study of theology in Catholic faculties worldwide to laymen and laywomen has brought a new demographic to the debate that was not there before, making the theology of the supernatural no longer an exclusively clerical discourse. The development of wider conversation in theology in an ecumenical context has also led to fruitful exchanges between Roman Catholics and Christians of other ecclesial communities. If theology of the supernatural in 1946 was a Franco-Roman

Catholic clerical discussion, in 2010 it is an American-English Christians-of-all-stripes lay one.

In this chapter we will examine the provocative thesis of Feingold, Milbank's reaction to it, as well as the observations of much of the critical literature written since. We will pay particular attention to the work of Reinhard Hütter, who, in analyzing the debate between Feingold and Milbank, returns to the discussion of the desire for God as an intellectual one, opening the way for SCG III 25 to illuminate the discussion.

## 1. LAWRENCE FEINGOLD

### 1.1. *Feingold and the Natural Desire to See God According to St Thomas*

Feingold's book is divided into sixteen chapters, a conclusion and a very useful biography, which lists works of St Thomas, as well as books and articles on the supernatural question from St Thomas's time down to our own<sup>6</sup>. In his Introduction, Feingold states as his aim, «to examine exactly what St Thomas means when he speaks of a natural desire to see God, and how the debate over its interpretation bears on fundamental questions concerning the relation between nature and grace»<sup>7</sup>. He describes the same two schools of thought on the question that Borde discerned in his intervention at the Toulouse Colloquium. He then adds that «at stake is the distinction between the natural and supernatural orders, the corresponding distinction between natural and supernatural beatitude, and the gratuitousness of heaven»<sup>8</sup>. Whereas other authors have been content to note that the question of natural desire is wrapped up in these other questions, it does not seem they put the gravity of their mutual inter-relation as starkly as does Feingold. Yet for Feingold, after completing his intense historical and systematic study of these questions, the consequences for the incorrect interpretation of this question are weighty indeed.

Feingold discerns that the answers to four important questions are at play here. Before he lists those questions, however, he posits another question which can be seen as kind of an Ur-question the answer to which determines all other questions: *is the natural desire for God elicited by some knowledge of God's existence or completely unconditional and unrelated to knowledge?* Feingold notes that *natural desire* is an analogical term. Feingold maintains that the natural desire for God in man has to be elicited because of the very structure of human nature. He writes that if an object is «pleasing to the senses, there will

follow a movement of the sense appetite; if the object is grasped as good by the intellect, there will follow a movement of the rational appetite, which is the will»<sup>9</sup>. The desire is *elicited*, in the sense that it is «'drawn out,' as it were, by the desirability of the known object»<sup>10</sup>. The natural desire for Feingold, against De Lubac, is clearly elicited.

The first question then, becomes, *Does this natural elicited desire correspond to an underlying innate appetite for the vision of God, a sign that will and intellect are ordered by their nature to the vision of God?* Here Feingold notes the exegetical problem of the interpretation of the two seemingly contradictory texts of St Thomas on this question, and the consequent formation of two schools of thought based on those variant interpretations.

The second question is, *Is this natural desire conditional or absolute?* Feingold observes that St Thomas never directly confronted this question, and that the divergence of opinion as to its answer is based on an attempt to reconstruct how St Thomas might have answered the question based on other principles found in his work. He notes that the view of natural desire as conditional comes from the sixteenth century theologians Medina, Báñez, Suárez, and John of St Thomas and was held almost universally by Thomists until De Lubac.

The third question is, *Is the existence of a natural desire for God in St Thomas a strict proof of the possibility of the beatific vision, or is it just an argument of fittingness?* Feingold sees three alternative answers to this question. The first is that «the natural desire to see God provides only an argument of fittingness»<sup>11</sup> for the possibility and the actual offer of the beatific vision, a thesis held by most Thomists from Báñez to Garrigou-Lagrange. The second is that it demonstrates the possibility, but only shows fittingness for the offer, a thesis held by De Broglie and Maréchal. The third, which is that of De Lubac and Jansen, is that it demonstrates both the possibility and the offer.

The answer to the third question thus raises the fourth question, *How can an innate and absolute desire, which strictly demonstrates the possibility and the offer of the beatific vision, be reconciled with the fact that the beatific vision and grace are in no way due to the creature?* Here Feingold raises the question of pure nature, and notes that De Lubac himself had to rework his 1946 thesis after *Humani generis* to account, at least in some way, for pure nature.

In outlining these four questions in this way, Feingold has constructed the flow chart of questions for whose existence we hoped in examining the manuals, histories and articles of theology in the Second Part of this thesis. He

succinctly outlines how the questions rise from each other and are inter-related to their answers.

Feingold in his Introduction says very clearly from the outset, «I come to disagree in this work with the interpretation made famous by Henri de Lubac in his works *Surnaturel*» and *Le Mystère du surnaturel*!<sup>12</sup> Yet he seconds the intuition that led De Lubac to his famous work, namely, the attempt to address the pastoral problem that «contemporary man has lost the sense of the supernatural character of Christian promise and vocation»<sup>13</sup>. He also maintains that the theology of the supernatural is not the key to understanding De Lubac's work, as others have held. And he expresses profound admiration for many of De Lubac's other celebrated texts, such as his *Catholicisme* and *Exégèse Médievale*.

While insisting that De Lubac was wrong in his answers to the above four questions, Feingold nonetheless writes approvingly that De Lubac identified eight questions that are central to correctly understanding the supernatural problem. 1) Does the rational creature have a natural potency to be elevated to the vision of God? 2) Is specific obediential potency an adequate category to characterize our openness to grace? 3) Has a supernatural finality, generating an innate and absolute natural desire for God, been imprinted on our nature prior to grace? 4) Does the fact that there is a natural desire for God mean that no other final end exists for man? 5) How can we reconcile the natural desire to see God with the gratuitousness of the supernatural? 6) Can the notion of what is due to nature help us distinguish between nature and the supernatural? 7) How can the object of an innate and conditional appetite not be due to nature? 8) How are grace and the theological virtues not due to a nature with an innate desire?

Although Feingold appears to claim that De Lubac rightly identified the questions and struggled to answer them, he also claims that De Lubac's answers were wrong. Furthermore, he asserts that the «classical Thomistic school» De Lubac «so violently opposed has the elements of a solution that provides a fine balance between the natural desire for the vision of God and the distinction of the natural and supernatural orders»<sup>14</sup>. In other words, Feingold sets himself the task of doing what virtually no one dared to do since *Surnaturel*, return to the *status quo ante* De Lubac, but in such a way as absolves that line of thought of the criticisms De Lubac attributed to it, the same ones that had been widely accepted in the theological academy since at least after the Second Vatican Council.

In this project, Feingold goes beyond those who, like Nicolas, maintain such a pre-De Lubac thesis while integrating much of the French Jesuit's concerns over against those who have assented wholeheartedly to De Lubac's thesis. This attempt, and the way which Feingold argues it, has caused a significant debate in the English-speaking theological world.

Feingold begins his discussion of natural desire in St Thomas with the fact that *appetite* is an analogical reality. This is an interesting point of departure, because many theologians in their discussion of natural appetite have begun with the analogical reality of nature as opposed to that of appetite. Feingold commences with the principle of St Thomas that «every nature has an inclination or appetite toward its proper good, which is a participation of the divine goodness»<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, each thing desires that good «according to its mode of being»<sup>16</sup>. Hence the appetite of man is a *rational* one, as opposed to the natural or sensitive appetite of non-living creatures and animals. As such, it is «aroused on the base of intellectual knowledge»<sup>17</sup>. Man's appetite therefore follows upon rational or intellectual knowledge, which grasps the nature of the good, and is hence elicited by the good<sup>18</sup>.

Feingold notes that a faculty of the soul can desire in two ways: 1) as the object of the innate *natural* appetite, in which case the desire is present in potency, an *unconscious* tendency of the potency towards its fulfillment. 2) insofar as it is known as good, hence *elicited and conscious*<sup>19</sup>. The will, then, has a natural desire for its end, but as goods present themselves to the intellect, that desire can be said to be elicited. This distinction leads Feingold to posit that, for St Thomas, there is a clear distinction between elicited and natural appetite, even if St Thomas does not formulate the distinction in those words. *Inclination* refers to the movement of the natural appetite, while *natural desire* «that is a *movement* or *act* of the will, aroused by prior knowledge» is an elicited desire<sup>20</sup>.

Elicited acts of the will are further subdivided into natural (*voluntas ut natura*) and free (*voluntas ut ratio*). Feingold gives an example: «it is naturally known that happiness, life and health are good, and thus they are naturally and spontaneously loved and desired... it is not naturally known that seeing a doctor or taking medicine are the best means to health»<sup>21</sup>. The fact that we have a natural appetite as opposed to a rational appetite, and a rational appetite that is divided into natural and free, can be a source for confusion (or a pretext for conflation). Feingold points out that *natural* is not equated with *innate*, and *natural* applies both to the innate inclination of the will and to elicited acts of the will which naturally arise before knowledge<sup>22</sup>.

But *what is naturally willed by man*? Feingold responds: first, the good in general (such as happiness, the full possession of the good); second, all those things which are seen as necessary for the well-being of the person (ex: being, life, truth). This leads to another question: *How is our will determined to will some things naturally and not freely*? Feingold introduces St Thomas' distinction between two modes by which the will is «necessitated»<sup>23</sup>. Some things naturally and irresistibly attract the will, such as happiness, whenever they are considered. But in this life, they are not always considered; we can choose not to consider them, and as a result, our will is not naturally and irresistibly attracted to them. Feingold posits that it is for this reason the Scholastic axiom developed: «the will is said to be necessitated *with regard to specification*, but not *with regard to exercise*»<sup>24</sup>. In other words, «secondary objects of natural desire necessarily attract the will, they do not necessitate choice»<sup>25</sup>.

Yet *can this natural desire be willed conditionally*? Here Feingold refers to St Thomas's consideration of Jesus Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, «Not My will, but Yours be done», referring to God's will that He suffer for the sins of the world<sup>26</sup>. Here St Thomas affirms that, Christ did will things not in conformity with the divine will, and discerns the natural human desire, the divine will, and the deliberate choice of His human will to follow the divine will contrary to natural desire. «Although *overruled* by His deliberated will, His natural desire was not *eliminated* by it»<sup>27</sup>. Feingold extrapolates from this dynamic within Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane a truth applicable to all men: «conditional willing of *voluntas ut natura*... is a willing *secundum quid*», namely, that the will moves towards what is desired as long as there is nothing to obstruct it. It is therefore an imperfect or conditional natural desire, what the Scholastics called *velleitas*<sup>28</sup>.

This lengthy but tightly reasoned analysis of the relationship between desire and nature leads Feingold to a conclusion: that for St Thomas, «natural desires, which are elicited acts of the will, are nevertheless implicitly conditional or imperfect, except in the single case of the desire for happiness itself. This means that a natural desire to see God can be conditional, without ceasing to be a truly natural desire»<sup>29</sup>. By this, Feingold establishes that a desire *can* be natural, elicited, and conditional all at the same time.

But is the desire for *God* natural, elicited, and conditional? Feingold maintains that St Thomas develops an idea of the desire for God as natural and elicited in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, particularly in III, ch. 25, 50-1, a teaching which is repeated in the *Compendium theologiae* I, ch. 104. Feingold



bases five conclusions on these texts of St Thomas about the natural desire to see God. First, this desire is derived from the desire man has to know. Second, it is an elicited desire. Third, it is based on the principle that it is good for man to know the ultimate causes of things. Fourth, this desire is *natural* in the sense that the consideration of the existence of God leads man to know more about God. Fifth, even though St Thomas does not say whether the desire is conditional or not, it is consistent with the rest of his teaching on natural desire to posit that it is conditional<sup>30</sup>.

Nonetheless, Feingold maintains that even this examination of the texts in St Thomas leaves us with five unresolved problems<sup>31</sup>. He lists them as follows. First, if, as St Thomas repeats, it is a revealed truth that the vision of God is an end too great for our will to desire, how can it be a truly *natural* desire? Second, if our supernatural end is above the power of natural reason to know, how can St Thomas then provide a demonstration that we even have a supernatural end?<sup>32</sup> Third, if our supernatural end is above what is due to nature, and distinct from our connatural end, how can the desire for it be natural? Fourth, if we naturally desire happiness in general, but do not naturally desire the beatific vision, then how can there be a natural desire for such a vision? Fifth, if the desire to see God is natural, how is that any different than the virtue of hope, which is a theological virtue infused in the soul by God? Feingold notes that the texts of St Thomas leave us with these questions, which arose in the subsequent centuries of wrestling with these texts.

Feingold suggests that these questions arise in the mind of anyone who reads the texts of St Thomas. He writes, «The ability to resolve them will be the test of a valid interpretation»<sup>33</sup>. In the course of his work, he seeks to answer these questions, by tracing the theological enterprise to confront the multifaceted supernatural question in St Thomas' commentators.

### 1.2. *Feingold on Cajetan and the Development of a Thomistic Consensus*

Feingold dedicates 101 pages to a close analysis of Cajetan's commentaries on St Thomas, as opposed to the three pages De Lubac dedicated to them in *Surnaturel*<sup>34</sup>. At the end of his section on Cajetan, he provides two sections entitled, «»Comparison of Cajetan, Scotus, De Lubac and St Thomas» and «Conclusion»<sup>35</sup>.

In his comparison of the three thinkers, Feingold makes some interesting observations. First of all, he declares that Scotus, Cajetan (in his first com-

mentary), and De Lubac agree, against St Thomas, «that the existence of the natural desire cannot be naturally known by man, and that it depends directly on the *fact* or the *possibility* of our being ordered to a supernatural end». He then notes that Cajetan and St Thomas agree, in opposition to Scotus and De Lubac, «that the desire is dependent on knowledge and is conscious, and that it cannot be conceived as an innate natural inclination or as a natural potency in the proper sense»<sup>36</sup>.

Feingold's interpretation of Cajetan is important because he points out that Cajetan «corrected» one of his theses in a later work. In his commentary on ST I q12 a1, Cajetan states that the natural desire for God «comes from the fact that God has actually destined us to see Him face to face and therefore has *revealed* to us certain supernatural facts which stem from Him not as Author of nature, but as Author of grace»<sup>37</sup>. In his later commentary on ST I-II q3 a8, he states that «the natural desire» does not come from man's [actual] elevation to a supernatural destiny (De Lubac), or from the *possibility* of such a perfection (Scotus), or from the revelation of *supernatural* effects of God [Cajetan in ST I q12 a1]»<sup>38</sup>. Rather, having seen its effect, man, having an intellectual nature with a natural desire, wants to know the essence of the cause.

Feingold admits Cajetan's erroneous interpretation of St Thomas on the natural desire in the first text, while pointing out its self-correction in the second text<sup>39</sup>. So why, then, did De Lubac and others so viciously attack Cajetan on this point? Feingold suggests that, if one understands Cajetan from a view of natural potency and inclinations as St Thomas explains them, there are no grounds for criticizing Cajetan. What De Lubac and others have done, Feingold charges, is interpret Cajetan's understanding of obediential potency according to the way Scotus accounted for potency and inclination<sup>40</sup>. In other words, Feingold seems to say that it is unfair to judge Cajetan for not being faithful to St Thomas on the natural desire for God by way of an understanding of potency and inclination that is itself foreign to St Thomas and is instead the idea of Scotus, who contradicts St Thomas on the question of natural desire based on his idea of potency and inclination<sup>41</sup>.

When Cajetan denies a *natural* passive potency for the vision of God, he affirms that the vision of God, grace and the theological virtues are all intrinsically supernatural. He is not denying that the vision of God perfects human nature as such, but rather sustaining the fact that this supernatural perfection exceeds both our natural knowledge and inclination.

We are hard-pressed to avoid the conclusion that, for Feingold, the idea that Cajetan has developed a «two-story» conception of nature and grace is patently false. Such a conception would indeed be wrong. As Feingold explains, «conceiving the order of grace as a second story *obscures its transcendence* by making it appear simply as a higher copy of the first floor... The two orders are related as earth to heaven... If we did not have a natural desire to see God, there would be no foundation in nature for its elevation to grace and glory»<sup>42</sup>. But, as Feingold demonstrates, Cajetan is not the architect of the two-story building.

De Lubac insisted that the post-Cajetanian development of the theology of the supernatural was a journey of increasing devolution within a system flawed from the beginning of its creation by Cajetan. Feingold, on the contrary, insists that the work of Medina, Báñez and Suárez, which resulted in the Thomistic consensus so widely accepted on the eve of *Surnaturel* and so violently attacked by it, is but a legitimate development of the same ideas present, not just in Cajetan, but in St Thomas himself. Feingold notes that for these latter commentators of St Thomas, «the axiom that a natural desire cannot be in vain is a principle which must be applied analogically, considering the particular type of natural desire that is involved»<sup>43</sup>. As a result, the natural desire to see God is imperfect and disproportionate, exceeding the limits of human nature. For this reason, these commentators cannot provide a demonstration of the possibility or the offer of the beatific vision by means of the natural desire for God, even if that same natural desire proves the perfection of the intellectual creature lies in God<sup>44</sup>.

Feingold further writes that St Thomas' texts on natural desire for God «lead to the conclusion that this desire could only be taken away by removing our intellect and will»<sup>45</sup>. This consensus of theologians on the natural desire for God, as elaborated principally by Suárez upon St Thomas, Cajetan, Sylvester of Ferrara, Medina and Báñez, would last for three hundred years. It seems to be Feingold's self-appointed goal in this thesis to return to it after the relatively shorter departure from it for the last sixty years.

### 1.3. *Feingold's Criticism of De Lubac*

Feingold dedicates 100 pages to a close analysis of De Lubac, and another 50<sup>46</sup> to summarizing his conclusion that the corruptor of St Thomas is not Cajetan, but indeed De Lubac. Yet, throughout his text, Feingold has

examined his authors with a careful eye towards the challenge he mounts to De Lubac at the end.

Feingold begins with a clever observation, «De Lubac and Suárez agree that the possibility of a ‘state of pure nature’ is incompatible with an innate and unconditional natural desire to see God»<sup>47</sup>. They disagree in opting for two opposing alternatives. Here Feingold identifies the neuralgic point of the debate. Ostensibly an argument over the interpretation of natural desire for God in St Thomas, lurking behind that was the question of the compatibility of pure nature with a desire conceived of as innate and unconditional. The Thomistic consensus was content to declare that the two were incompatible with each other. De Lubac claimed that they were incompatible because pure nature did not exist. Once forced by *Humani generis* to admit the existence of pure nature, the burden of his constant clarification was placed on his demonstration of how pure nature could be compatible with innate and unconditional natural desire for God.

We have seen earlier that De Lubac did not conceive of potency and inclination in the same way the Thomists did, but he still rejected the Thomists’ conclusions (which were based on a Thomistic conception of potency and inclination) because they were inconsistent with what was really a Scotist conception of potency and inclination that could never admit of the Thomistic conclusions. In a similar bait-and-switch move, De Lubac accuses the Thomistic idea of pure nature as being a fabrication injurious to Christian civilization, when the De Lubacian idea of pure nature and the Thomistic idea of pure nature are entirely different. For De Lubac, pure nature was a state of purely natural happiness «in which man would be basically self-sufficient and closed into himself, not needing God’s aid for his beatitude»<sup>48</sup>. But such an idea of pure nature was not at all held by the Thomists. As De Lubac’s adversary Boyer defined it, pure nature is «a state in which man possesses all that which belongs to his definition, all that which is necessary for the exercise of his faculties, all that which is required for living reasonably and attaining a proportionate end»<sup>49</sup> which Feingold adds, is «*loving contemplation of God as grasped through His work of creation*»<sup>50</sup>. De Lubac rejects the entire Thomistic consensus based on what amounts to a misapprehension of pure nature.

In his chapter 15, Feingold lists twelve ways in which De Lubac’s thesis is incompatible with St Thomas. We will attempt to summarize them here.

First, St Thomas and De Lubac «present *two completely different models* of how our nature is ordered and inclined to its supernatural end»<sup>51</sup>. For St

Thomas, nature is ordered intrinsically and inclines only to its connatural end; it is ordered and inclined to its supernatural end, not through itself, but through the super-added principles of grace and the virtues. For De Lubac, nothing needs to be super-added to nature to determine it to a supernatural end because it is already intrinsically finalized to that end.

Second, there is no basis in St Thomas for De Lubac to posit that the supernatural end of the creature generates a corresponding innate appetite or natural inclination prior to grace<sup>52</sup>.

Third, De Lubac contends that St Thomas uses the term *desiderium naturale* to speak of a elicited and natural desire and *desiderium naturae* to speak of something deeper than *desiderium naturale* and not elicited. Feingold maintains that in the ten texts in which St Thomas employs the term *desiderium naturae*, his use of it is synonymous with his use of the term *desiderium naturale*. In fact, De Lubac is actually contrasting how Scotus uses the term *desiderium naturae* with how St Thomas uses the term *desiderium naturale*<sup>53</sup>.

Fourth, De Lubac is in agreement with St Thomas that actually existing nature does not have any supernatural element. De Lubac cannot reconcile this teaching with his assertion that the natural desire for God is the expression of a supernatural finality imprinted on our nature in creation itself, prior to grace and determining us to our supernatural end<sup>54</sup>.

Fifth, for St Thomas, intellectual nature is naturally open to being elevated to a supernatural end through grace. De Lubac, however, states that man is more than open, he is already intrinsically determined, finalized and called to a supernatural end through a supernatural finality imprinted on us, prior to grace<sup>55</sup>.

Sixth, De Lubac says that the natural desire for God is the most absolute of all desires, but that it is also not perfect or efficacious. Yet, for St Thomas, because the natural desire for God is a desire for knowledge of the essence of the first cause, it cannot be absolute and is hence conditional. This is why it is not perfect or efficacious<sup>56</sup>. Asserting that natural desire is absolute, De Lubac «is attributing to it elements proper both to the theological virtues... and to the natural desire for happiness in general». Feingold charges in doing so, that De Lubac confuses the natural desire for happiness generated by the will and that sufficient inclination for our supernatural end generated by grace, two things St Thomas distinguished clearly between<sup>57</sup>.

Seventh, De Lubac, along with Scotus, believes that the existence of natural desire cannot be reached by natural reason without revelation, in contrast

to St Thomas, for whom the structure of our capacity to know leads to the affirmation that we naturally desire the knowledge of first causes<sup>58</sup>.

Eighth, De Lubac affirms that the natural desire to see God demonstrates the actual offer of the beatific vision, based on the axiom that natural desire cannot be in vain. St Thomas, however, uses the axiom analogically, and concludes that it demonstrates the incorruptibility of the soul, that human life has an end beyond this life, the fittingness of the resurrection, why the natural desire to escape death may be frustrated in man, and the possibility of the vision of God<sup>59</sup>.

Ninth, in *Surnaturel*, something can be due to a creature's nature in virtue of a natural inclination implanted in the creature and still not make God dependent on the creature. Yet, if it is due in this way, it cannot be said to be gratuitous<sup>60</sup>. In *Mystère du surnaturel*, Feingold claims, De Lubac transfers the problem of gratuitousness by saying that pure nature shows only the gratuitousness of grace with respect to «another humanity» that has not received a supernatural finality, while it remains to be shown in regard to concretely existing historical man. For Feingold, this seems to avoid the fact that only pure nature can show that gratuitousness<sup>61</sup>.

Tenth, De Lubac proposes that the supernatural is gratuitous because it is supernatural, and is given as gift. But for Feingold, «the gratuitousness of the gift of grace and glory does not come solely from the divine or personal aspect of the gift, considered in itself, but *from its relation to the recipient*, to whom it is not due»<sup>62</sup>.

Eleventh, De Lubac assumes that «God's intention to elevate us to a supernatural end essentially determines the constitution of our nature», thus making pure nature irrelevant to the gratuitousness of our supernatural end. Feingold rejects this assumption for two reasons: One, because «St Thomas shows the existence of a natural desire to see God in *every* intellectual creature, independently of the fact of its actually being destined to a supernatural end» as a «direct consequence of the natural desire to know causes and essences». Two, for St Thomas, man is intrinsically ordered to his supernatural end only through the super-added principles of grace and the theological virtues. In other words, «it is not the nature as such which has been changed by the fact of elevation, so that the nature itself –having received a supernatural finality– now orders us to the vision of God»<sup>63</sup>.

Twelfth, De Lubac's contention that the Thomistic distinction between nature and the supernatural led to naturalism and atheism is not tenable for

four reasons. One, the Thomists argue that, in any hypothesis, man's final happiness can only lie in God. Two, Modern naturalism and atheism can be demonstrated to arise from the Enlightenment, when Thomism was eclipsed by it. Third, the distinction between a natural and a supernatural end is necessary to correctly distinguish the two orders and avoid the construction of a monistic one natural-supernatural order. Fourth, atheism rejects not only the supernatural end of man, God, but also the connatural end of man, God contemplated through creation<sup>64</sup>.

For all of these reasons, Feingold challenges, not only De Lubac's theology of the supernatural as a whole, but the entire argument that post-Cajetanian Thomism was a decadent Scholasticism unworthy of theology. On the contrary, Feingold maintains that post-Cajetanian Thomism to be a legitimate development of St Thomas. As he explains,

The development of Thomism in the period from 1500 to 1900 is all too often imagined today principally as a corruption of doctrine, in which Cajetan and Suárez are the principal villains, subverting the teaching of St Thomas –including his doctrine on the natural desire to see God– and closing man in on himself. In this work, I have tried to show that the Thomistic tradition in this period manifests a gradual development of doctrine with regard to this question, as theologians such as Cajetan, Sylvester of Ferrara and Suárez, followed by many others, responded fruitfully to the challenges posed by Scotus, de Soto, Baius and Jansenius. Those challenges spurred Thomists to give greater nuance and development to the thesis of St Thomas<sup>65</sup>.

Feingold is not content, however, to argue that post-Cajetanian Thomism is a legitimate development of the thought of St Thomas. He accuses the critics of that Thomism for being «seriously detrimental to the cause of theology and the life of the Church» because they have introduced «a violent rupture rather than organic growth» into Catholic theology, which «must be the householder of the Gospel 'who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old'»<sup>66</sup>. He likens the development of post-Cajetanian Thomism to the homogenous development of doctrine described by Blessed John Henry Newman in his book, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. In contrast, the detractors from this development seem to be inferred to be akin to terrorists who have upset the *pax theologica* with ultimately incorrect ideas.

Feingold ends his thesis with five reasons why we should accept the pre-De Lubacian Thomistic theology of the supernatural. First, the rejection of

an innate appetite for the vision of God shows the gratuitousness of the supernatural which God grants to man surpassing his nature. Second, «the interpretation of the natural desire to see God as an elicited natural desire rather than the innate tendency of nature itself better manifests the *transcendence* of God». Third, the fact that man is intrinsically ordered to God not by nature but by grace «better manifests the *humility* of the spiritual creature» to whom nothing is due. Fourth, «the exclusion of an innate inclination for the beatific vision better manifests the necessity of the sacraments and the supernatural virtue of charity». The desire for the beatific vision comes from the grace of Baptism and not from something already within man. Fifth, De Lubac's view «debases heaven by naturalizing it». Restoring the proper balance in the teaching of the natural desire for God can cause man to «discover ever again a radical wonder at the inconceivable dimension of» the supernatural life<sup>67</sup>.

#### 1.4. *Some Further Thoughts on Feingold*

Before we go on to examine Milbank's response to Feingold, it might be helpful here to pause to consider some of Feingold's criticism. Is it possible that Feingold is complicating the question unnecessarily? For St Thomas, all things desire the good, and in doing so, implicitly desire God. This same dynamic obtains for man, with the exception that man has a capacity for all the good, at least in its infinite openness to all good. In this optic, *voluntas ut natura* is the general inclination of the will to the good, which manifests itself in the first concrete inclination towards that which appears as the good, and is also behind the decision of reason to obtain that good.

The desire for God is nothing else than the inclination of intellect, which by its very nature desires to know, and God is the only object that justifies and fills this desire. It is not a desire for God because God has presented himself to consciousness, but because it is just the desire to know, which in man is the desire to know all, which can be finalized only in God. For this reason, the question of whether the desire for God is elicited or unconditional is irrelevant. For St Thomas interprets the desire to know and to know all as the desire of nature for God. It is parallel to the question of good. Whatever man desires as good, is a desire for God, the *summum bonum*.

Feingold's evaluation of De Lubac's negative legacy to theology might also be profitably challenged. Is the twilight of Thomism really due to De Lubac's deleterious effect on theology? While it is certainly worthwhile to



suggest that there might be more to post-Cajetanian Thomism than many latter twentieth-century theologians gave it credit for, is it also not possible that Thomism around the turn of the century had already exhausted itself because of its refusal to integrate the insights of the biblical and liturgical movements into its thought?

## 2. JOHN MILBANK

### 2.1. *A Brief Introduction to Radical Orthodoxy*

The desire of theologians to help man rediscover awe and wonder motivated De Lubac and Feingold to meditate on the relationship between nature and the supernatural in man. They of course are not the only thinkers to consider the problem with this goal in mind. While Feingold was pursuing his philosophical and theological studies in Rome which would culminate in his controversial thesis arguing for the jettisoning of De Lubac's theology of the supernatural, a movement was afoot to carry out De Lubac's intuitions on the supernatural to their logical extremes. Three professors of theology at the University of Cambridge in England were developing what has come to be known as the new theological school of Radical Orthodoxy. John Milbank (b. 1952), Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward (b. 1955), are all Anglican theologians who, like Feingold, seek to present the truth of the Christian faith in the post-modern world<sup>68</sup>.

Originally, Radical Orthodoxy was called *Postmodern Critical Augustinianism* and is held to have its remote origin in John Milbank's 1990 book *Theology and Social Theory*<sup>69</sup>. Looking for a catchier title, the three Cambridge dons settled for the term Radical Orthodoxy for the collection of essays which was to be the Magna Carta of the movement<sup>70</sup>. In the Introduction to this collection, the editors describe how this movement is both *orthodox* and *radical*.

Orthodox in the most straightforward sense of commitment to creedal Christianity and the exemplarity of its Christian matrix. But orthodox also in the more specific sense of re-affirming a richer and more coherent Christianity which was gradually lost sight of in the Middle Ages...

Radical, first of all, in a sense of a return to patristic and medieval roots, and especially to the Augustinian vision of all knowledge as divine illumination – a notion which transcends the modern bastard dualisms of faith and reason,

nature and grace—. Radical, second, in the sense of seeking to deploy this recovered vision systematically to criticize modern society, culture, politics, art, science and philosophy with an unprecedented boldness. But radical in yet a third sense of realizing that via such engagements we *do* have to also rethink the tradition<sup>71</sup>.

Radical Orthodoxy sees itself very much as the continuation of the *nouvelle théologie*, which arguably might have set the same tasks for itself as Milbank sets for Radical Orthodoxy. Its critique of modernity and post-modernity faults the post-Cajetanian Thomist tradition for the fabrication of the separation of natural and supernatural. But Radical Orthodoxy seeks to push the critique of the *nouvelle théologie* even further, «in recovering and extending a fully Christianized ontology and practical philosophy consonant with authentic Christian doctrine»<sup>72</sup>.

While the three main originators of Radical Orthodoxy are associated with the High Church Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, the contributors to the seminal volume also includes other Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics. Eight of the twelve are British. The others are Americans. All of them are associated with Cambridge University as professors, students or devotees. This trans-denominational and Anglo-American project may have its inspiration in De Lubac and his fellow theologians associated with the *nouvelle théologie*. Its adherents, however, are quick to point out that they do not subscribe to what is generally held as the theology of Thomism, Transcendental Thomism, *ressourcement*, neo-Patristics, or *Communio*. Where it differs from all of these other movements in theology is its attitude towards post-modernism. Even while mounting a vicious critique of post-modernism, Radical Orthodoxy «seeks to retrieve the deep theological resources of the Christian tradition –particularly pre-modern resources in the fathers and medievals– to let them speak *to* postmodernism»<sup>73</sup>. Hence it very clearly dialogues in a serious fashion with the analytical philosophical tradition whose hegemony is unquestioned in Anglo-American academia, as well as the post-modern linguistic philosophies of those such as Michel Foucault.

Not unlike the *nouvelle théologie*, Radical Orthodoxy has raised much discussion in the theological arena, even though its influence is mostly felt in Anglican Anglo-American circles. Yet unlike the *nouvelle théologie*, Radical Orthodoxy has not found itself embroiled in controversy with the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. However, even though there are some nota-

ble Roman Catholic theologians associated with Radical Orthodoxy, their participation tends to be more nuanced and less enthusiastic than their Anglican confreres. An example is Laurence Paul Hemming, Senior Research Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Lancaster University and a Roman Catholic deacon. He contributed an essay on nihilism entitled, «Heidegger and the Grounds of Redemption» to the initial volume of Radical Orthodoxy<sup>74</sup>. In the year 2000, however, he edited a volume entitled, *Radical Orthodoxy? – A Catholic Enquiry*, in which the Radical Orthodox theologians and others reflected on the concerns Roman Catholics have with the school<sup>75</sup>.

In this volume, Hemming notes how Roman Catholics and Anglicans can write of the same things in Radical Orthodoxy but from a very different perspective. «When Catholics write of transubstantiation, or the dogma of the Assumption of the Mother of God, or the understanding of sacrifice implied in the Mass, we speak to, within the *ecclesia*, or the assembly, where these things are specifically taken to be true. When non-Catholics speak of these things, they do so in ecclesial contexts which do not receive these doctrines in the same way»<sup>76</sup>. This observation will be very important as Radical Orthodoxy considers certain documents of the Magisterium which have a direct bearing on the supernatural question, for example, *Humani generis*. An authentically Roman Catholic theologian must take this papal encyclical into account in his theology in a way very differently than how an Anglican can approach it<sup>77</sup>. Another example of how Roman Catholic approaches to theology differ from that of others is over the role of St Thomas. Milbank criticizes some of his Roman Catholic colleagues for believing it necessary «to revert to the view that what Aquinas thinks is necessarily decisive»<sup>78</sup>.

The nuanced position that Roman Catholic theologians have with respect to Radical Orthodoxy can be brought out via Milbank's reflection on how Radical Orthodoxy, while perpetuating the *nouvelle théologie*, is not to be identified with it. He notes, first of all, that Radical Orthodoxy is not Roman Catholic, but can be espoused by both Catholics and Protestants<sup>79</sup>. Second, Milbank asserts that «Roman Catholic theology actually finds it hugely difficult to come to terms with De Lubac's legacy», faulting liberals and conservatives for impeding such a coming to terms. Third, Milbank baldly attests, «Roman Catholicism can be seen... as profoundly colluding with a modernity it helped to construct»<sup>80</sup>. As Fergus Kerr observes, «aligning *Radical Orthodoxy* with the *nouvelle théologie* is already to invite more than one Catholic

response –to invite, perhaps, incommensurable responses–»<sup>81</sup>. He cites both Transcendental Thomism and «the continuators of post-Cajetanian Thomism» as united «to repudiate the project of a ‘fully Christianised ontology’»<sup>82</sup>. Kerr also observes that Catholics sympathetic to Radical Orthodoxy will find themselves inevitably at odds with what has become the two opposing schools of thought in which most contemporary Catholic theologians identify themselves –*Communio* versus *Concilium*–<sup>83</sup>.

Within this complex matrix of contemporary Catholic theology, perhaps the most polarized views would be, not that of *Communio* and *Concilium*, both of which are outgrowths of the *nouvelle théologie* and have the correct interpretation of the Second Vatican Council as the principal working strategy of their theology, but rather that of *Radical Orthodoxy* and what has questionably been called the *Neo-Cajetanism* of Feingold. For if Radical Orthodoxy represents the *nouvelle théologie* carried to its ultimate extreme by way of a recovery of pre-modern sources in attempt to critically engage post-Modernism, Feingold can be said to represent its opposite: the very theology the *nouvelle théologie* sought to eradicate by way of a recovery of modern sources seen in continuation of the pre-modern ones without the slightest attempt to engage post-Modernism. Needless to say, it was perhaps inevitable that Feingold’s thesis would provoke a response from Radical Orthodoxy, as both the *Concilium* and *Communio* crowds watched on, unsure as how to respond in turn, or if to respond at all.

## 2.2. Milbank’s Account of the Supernatural in *De Lubac*

Milbank intuits that De Lubac in his elaboration of the theology of the supernatural is actually doing something which goes far beyond the questions of pure nature and natural desire. For Milbank, De Lubac «implicitly proposed a new sort of ontology –indeed, in a sense a ‘non-ontology’– articulated *between* the discourses of philosophy and theology, fracturing their respective autonomies, but tying them loosely and yet firmly together»<sup>84</sup>. By this non-ontology, De Lubac could explain the relationship between «the pure immanent being proper to philosophy» and «the revelatory event proper to theology»<sup>85</sup>. Milbank then goes on to say that this new ontological discourse (which he has just claimed to be non-ontology) concerns the «paradoxical definition of human nature as intrinsically raised above itself to the ‘super-nature’ of divinity»<sup>86</sup>. Here Milbank notes the correlation between how De Lubac views

the relation between philosophy and theology and how he sees nature and the supernatural.

Milbank draws out the radical implications of this discourse. For him, it deconstructs the possibility of dogmatic theology as it had been understood up until De Lubac, as well as any independent conception of philosophy. «Philosophy then appears to require the transcendent supplement of theology, yet theology equally requires the (consequently non-available) foundation of philosophy»<sup>87</sup>. This assertion is built upon Von Balthasar's analysis of De Lubac's discourse as a «suspended middle»<sup>88</sup>.

However, whereas for Thomists this suspended middle degenerates into unsolvable *aporia*, Milbank welcomes it as a necessary revolution, because he maintains it allows De Lubac to attempt, by way of the exercise of historical theology in *Surnaturel*, a restoration of the pre-modern Augustinian thought Milbank holds to be essential to Radical Orthodoxy.

Yet, if De Lubac is attempting a recovery of an ostensibly Augustinian framework in which to discuss nature and the supernatural, philosophy and theology, then why does he focus so much on St Thomas? In reality, Milbank observes, «the paucity of De Lubac's treatment of Aquinas on the supernatural and on grace seems surprising», and is in fact the lacuna «exploited by his neo-scholastic critics»<sup>89</sup>. Milbank opines that the reason De Lubac was insistent on recruiting St Thomas for his system was that he represents «the possibility of an East-West synthesis (Augustine plus the Dionysius/Damascene legacy) and even more crucially that the attempt to incorporate Aristotle was positive»<sup>90</sup>.

But De Lubac's interpretation of St Thomas did not convince his critics, who, Milbank writes, alternately accused him of «naturalizing the supernatural» and «evacuating the natural sphere in favor of the rule of grace»<sup>91</sup>. In fact, it did not seem clear how De Lubac could avoid either extreme with his work. In order to avoid the one extreme, De Lubac in *Le Mystère du surnaturel* argues that the natural desire for God does not anticipate grace<sup>92</sup>. In turn, this «non-anticipation» is inconsistent with an absolute natural desire for beatitude. «In deference to *Humani generis*», Milbank informs us, De Lubac «drops from his re-worked 'The Mystery of the Supernatural' article the idea that there is a positive advance manifestation of the supernatural that 'gives the natural desire for the supernatural'»<sup>93</sup>. Milbank observes that, in doing so, «de Lubac's concessions to the Church hierarchy here seem to shift him more to a Scotist (and even latently Jansenist) exposition of his theory –which makes

the natural desire for the supernatural not any longer participatory, but only vaguely aspirational—»<sup>94</sup>.

This shift in explanation upon Magisterial intervention is for Milbank consequential. From one point of view, De Lubac does not really abandon his earlier position. As Milbank explains, «To sustain his ‘suspended middle’ de Lubac... strives rather to say that while Creation is the gift of independent existence and grace is the irresistible gift of nonetheless free and deified existence... then the natural desire of the supernatural is the gift of the bond between the two», a link which is both divine and human<sup>95</sup>. Yet from another point of view, it seems clear that *Humani generis*, because it «*did* entertain the notion of identifiable pure nature»<sup>96</sup> is at odds with De Lubac’s contention, both in the article and the book entitled *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, that pure nature cannot guarantee the gratuity of grace.

Milbank considers De Lubac’s treatment of pure nature and how grace is related to nature the «subtle heart of De Lubac’s theology»<sup>97</sup>. For De Lubac, «pure nature in fact ruins the articulation of divine gratuity» because «the gift of deification is guaranteed by *no* contrast». In fact, in the beatific vision, «our entire being is transfigured by the divine light. Here we *become* the reception of this light and there is no longer any additional ‘natural’ recipient of this reception. But this ensures, and does not destroy gratuity»<sup>98</sup>. Milbank is convinced that De Lubac escapes the thorny problem of how to assure gratuity without recourse to pure nature by recalling that the illumination of the beatific vision transfigures those who possess it<sup>99</sup>.

Yet, De Lubac does not escape entirely from avoiding lacunae in his thought, particularly after his reworking of his thesis after *Humani generis*. In fact they were «partly shaped by his battles with authority» when he evinced a «formal capitulation to papal authority»<sup>100</sup>. Milbank lists several questions that «continued to haunt De Lubac»: 1) If natural desire is already the working of grace, why is it a natural desire? 2) If it is not already grace at work, is there not an exigency for grace on the part of human nature? 3) If the cosmos returns to God through spirits, did God have to create spirits? 4) Is it inevitable that spirits are oriented to God if intellect is continuous with the animal soul, as per Aristotle? 5) If the orientation to grace is the mode taken by createness in intellectual creatures, how is the *datum optimum* of creation distinct from the *donum perfectum* of grace?

Milbank gives an account of De Lubac which encapsulates the French Jesuit’s thought all the while highlighting the themes most important for Rad-

ical Orthodoxy, such as the intimate union between nature and grace, the relation between philosophy and theology, and the role of divine illumination in knowledge. But he also accounts for the fact that De Lubac's work, particularly after his struggles with ecclesiastical superiors, admits of several lacunae and further questions with which he would continue to wrestle. It is an observation that Feingold would also make. For Feingold, those lacunae and questions arise from a double fundamental incoherence, within De Lubac's own system on the one hand and in comparison with the theological tradition of St Thomas and his commentators on the other. For Milbank, they arise from the fact that De Lubac was essentially too timid to take to his reasoning to its logical end, for fear of Church authority. He stopped short, and that is why he seems so maddeningly incomprehensible to some.

For Feingold, De Lubac's legacy to theology on the supernatural question is terribly ambivalent. For Milbank, on the other hand, that legacy, particularly as it can be advanced and furthered by Radical Orthodoxy without the fear of ecclesiastical repression, constitutes the great hope for theology. Milbank writes, «contemporary Catholic theology, if it is to avoid both a liberalism and a conservatism that are predicated on the idea of an autonomous pure nature, needs to recover the authentic and more radical account of the natural desire for the supernatural as offered by De Lubac»<sup>101</sup>. Since for Feingold, De Lubac's thesis on natural desire has proved disastrous for theology, it is unsurprising that Milbank, a self-appointed vanguard for De Lubac, would attack.

### 2.3. *Milbank's Criticism of Feingold*

Nowhere in *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* does Milbank indicate that he wrote the book as a response to Feingold's critique of De Lubac. But it is clear from the beginning that he has Feingold in mind. He introduces his brief but dense work with four quotes. The second quote is from a letter of De Lubac to Blondel in which the Jesuit asks, «How can a conscious spirit be anything other than an absolute desire for God?»<sup>102</sup> Curiously enough, his accompanying bibliographical reference notes that this quotation is cited by Feingold in the first edition of his work. Two observations should be made. First, in choosing to reference Feingold and not the original source, Milbank acknowledges at least in part his American colleague's scholarship, but it is unclear why he makes a point of citing it

via Feingold and not on its own. Second, from this very first instance all the way through his book, Milbank refers to Feingold as *Feinberg*. This consistent error, present wherever Milbank criticizes Feingold, may point to a certain cursory reading of Feingold.

That Milbank is hardly enamored of Feingold's presentation of the supernatural question is evident from a three page long footnote in which he first deals with Feingold<sup>103</sup>. He charges that Feingold selectively quotes from SCG III q25. Feingold omits the words, «An intellectual substance tends to divine knowledge as an ultimate end», from paragraph 2 of that question, as well as St Thomas' contention, as expressed by Milbank, «were the *telos* of the beatific vision *not* the end of spiritual creatures, they would have a 'less noble end' than non-spiritual creatures who would still be united to God after their own fashion». For Milbank, this quotation proves that De Lubac was right to assert that, «given his justice, God could *not* have created purely natural spirit». Milbank charges that, because Feingold begins only with paragraphs 11 and 12 in his treatment of the question, he omits the ontological context in which St Thomas speaks of natural desire to highlight human desire to know the causes of effects, which is part of Feingold's argument that natural desire is an elicited desire<sup>104</sup>.

Milbank lists other apparent omissions as well. He charges that Feingold, citing ST I Q 12 a1, omits the words, «for the ultimate perfection of the rational creature is to be found in that which is the principle of its being, since a thing is perfect in so far as it attains to its principle»<sup>105</sup>. He also notes that Feingold quotes ST I-II q 3 a8, «which provides less of the ontological background for the natural desire to see God» because he sees it as «'the most complete' treatment, presumably on the grounds that it gives a longer version of the epistemological aspect that he is more comfortable with»<sup>106</sup>.

Milbank claims that Feingold has written his «arch-reactionary book» in order to «reinstate a Garrigou-Lagrange type position». In order to do so, Feingold presumably omits what is not applicable to his thesis. Thus Feingold's «selectivity gives the lie to the appearance of scholarly bulk and solidity which the weight of this tome seems to promise». Not only that, «[i]ts exegetical method is much like that of the proof-texting of a Protestant fundamentalist»<sup>107</sup>. Within this critique of Feingold's selectivity, Milbank acknowledges what for him is the central point of dispute. For him, in St Thomas knowing and desiring «keep pace with each other», while «for Feinberg [sic] and the neo-Thomist view, there is *first* abstract intellectual



curiosity (without desire) and *then* an elicited desiring (without any degree of knowledge)»<sup>108</sup>.

In chapter seven of his book, Milbank places his criticism of Feingold within the context of his consideration of what he calls the new Freiburg-Toulouse school of Thomism. For him, this school «modified its traditional neo-Thomism to accommodate certain *nouvelle théologie* perspectives»<sup>109</sup>. But this school still, according to Milbank, continues to make four criticisms of De Lubac. First, they claim that De Lubac's thesis was essentially Scotist. Milbank responds that in fact, Scotus had already made grace extrinsic by asserting that grace does not «involve deification, which is an intrinsic raising of our finite nature»<sup>110</sup>. For Milbank, «De Lubac's thesis is far more Thomist than Scotist»<sup>111</sup>. Second, the fact that St Thomas believed in limbo, «the thorny problem of the souls in limbo who enjoy a purely natural beatitude», presents a challenge to De Lubac's interpretation that there is no such thing as a purely natural beatitude<sup>112</sup>. Third, although St Thomas does speak of a natural love for God, «we share this love even with non-sentient beings». For De Lubac however, «this was not a fully free and personal love, but rather that spontaneous animal affection which for Aquinas (here very Aristotelian) is nonetheless exercised by us at a more conscious intellectual and voluntary level»<sup>113</sup>. Fourth, these Thomists hold that it is important to note that St Thomas does not speak of *natura pura*, but *pura naturalia*. As Torrell argued at the Toulouse Colloquium, «*natura integra* before the Fall refers in Aquinas to the non-impairment of the *pura naturalia* and not to the entire intact natural/supernatural ordering»<sup>114</sup>.

While Milbank neither affirms or denies the validity of these criticisms of the «Freibourg-Toulouse» school, except for its assertion that De Lubac's thesis is essentially Scotist, he does indicate that some within the school<sup>115</sup> do have a definite position on the supernatural question. Milbank maintains that they are not ready «to allow an innate natural desire for the supernatural but only a variant of the Cajetanian *potentia obedientialis*»<sup>116</sup>.

Milbank also makes a useful observation about the difference between this «modified» «Freibourg-Toulouse» Thomist position and that of what he calls the «paleolithic» one of Garrigou-Lagrange. For both versions of Thomism, «there can be no rational demonstration of the arrival of grace on the basis of natural desire for the supernatural»<sup>117</sup>. In fact, the natural desire for the supernatural only points «in a remotely probable way to the actuality of the gift of grace»<sup>118</sup>. However, the Freiburg-Toulouse school presents

that probability as an «ontological fittingness» in which «there is *some* sort of actual anticipation of the supernatural end in the structures of human nature that exceeds a mere formally latent possibility»<sup>119</sup>. As Milbank notes, this nuanced adjustment of the earlier Thomist position is possible due to Torell and Narcisse's discussion of *convenientia* in St Thomas as an «aesthetic» term that indicates an ontological, and not just an epistemological, fittingness of human nature to receive the supernatural<sup>120</sup>.

But can there be a point of contact between the Freiburg-Toulouse school and De Lubac on the theology of the supernatural? For Milbank, it consists in the following. «Insofar as the fittingness (*convenientia*) of human nature «for supernatural elevation intrinsically participates in the divine wisdom, then... human nature must also be teleologically drawn towards the *eschaton* of beatitude that, nonetheless, it cannot elicit»<sup>121</sup>. But if *convenientia* is seen as just «the way an already replete human nature can appropriately lend itself to a further end and purpose added on to it by God»<sup>122</sup> the point of contact between De Lubac and Freiburg-Toulouse is weak indeed.

Milbank places his finger on the possibility of a reconciliation or of further divergence between both views. That the desire for God in human nature is a natural one is now taken for granted, even by the newer Thomistic school, and this change in position is the fruit of a lengthy and convoluted dialogue with De Lubac over decades. Whether it is natural in the sense that De Lubac held it to be so (an *élan* of the spirit) or as Cajetan did (an elicited, imperfect, and conditional desire) still divides theologians. But even in that division between two schools of thought, there is a point of contact: in human nature there is a *convenientia* for supernatural elevation. But in what does that *convenientia* consist? How one views the concept of *convenientia* in general, and then as applied to the relation between nature and the supernatural, will modify to what extent one can consider a synthesis of the two schools of thought. Milbank has highlighted the relevance of *convenientia* to this discussion, and it is undoubtedly the way forward in unpacking the supernatural problem. But much more study is in order to precisely establish a mutually agreeable conception of *convenientia* before it can be applied to the question. If not, then we will be in the same situation as with *nature* and *desire*: their true meaning obfuscated by univocal readings of texts or attempts to strait-jacket one or another definition of the term in a system which presupposes another definition<sup>123</sup>.

The issue of *convenientia* aside, it is clear that Milbank does not attempt an exhaustive critique of Feingold or of the Freiburg-Toulouse school of Thomism. Milbank's attitude towards the former is much less appreciative than of the latter. It is clear that his brief confrontation with Feingold and the authors of the Toulouse Colloquium has not diminished his enthusiasm for De Lubac. He argues that De Lubac's thesis should be extended to its extreme consequences. Such a «radicalization» as he calls it, is for him entirely consistent with the Thomistic and Patristic tradition.

What does this radicalization look like? Milbank gives us a glimpse. First, he claims that because St Thomas «presents the natural desire for the supernatural in the context of the general drive of all creatures towards the maximum possible unity with God», then it follows that, contrary to *Humani generis*, «there is no spiritual existence without grace»<sup>124</sup>. Second, because Providence is involved in the governance of spiritual creatures, then there is something about spirit which is not merely natural. In fact, «the providential mode of dealing with spiritual creatures ultimately includes grace»<sup>125</sup>. Third, St Thomas does not envisage a cosmos without intellect. Therefore, if «cosmos requires the government of the spirit» and «spirit is destined to be engraced» then «every creature is already by and for grace»<sup>126</sup>. Fourth, if for St Thomas, «we are not by our nature turned to our last end», the freedom God has given us allows us to «reach this end of our own accord (at one level)»<sup>127</sup>. Just as Aristotle said, «For what we do by means of our friends, is done in a sense, by ourselves»<sup>128</sup>, the friend of grace allows *us* to accomplish all that grace invites our freedom to choose. In this sense, perhaps it is not far off the mark to say, that for Milbank, even more so than for De Lubac, and in contrast to Thomists from Cajetan to Feingold, «Tout est grâce»<sup>129</sup>.

### 3. REACTIONS TO FEINGOLD VS. MILBANK

Milbank's brief and concise elucidation of De Lubac's thought on the supernatural, as well as the possibilities for its radicalization, was brought about in part in reaction to Feingold. Others in the theological academic community noticed Milbank's response to Feingold, and gave both Milbank and Feingold attention. Because both of their positions, which might be summarized as *De Lubac radicalized* and *Cajetan recovered* were seen as ex-centric to the more familiar *nouvelle théologie* and Thomist interpretations, they aroused heated

debate. If Milbank's spirited response to Feingold can be accurately classified as an outbreak of *rabies theologica*, it can be proposed that the debate which has ensued ever since, and which is ongoing, is comparable to the vehemence with which De Lubac's thesis was debated in the years after *Surnaturel*. Here we will consider just a few samples of those reactions.

### 3.1. Oakes

Oakes begins his response to Milbank by placing the supernatural problematic within the context of one of the most controversial issues in contemporary theology: the pluralist theology of religions. How one views the nature/supernatural dialectic at one and the same time determines and is determined by how one views the theology of religions. He writes, «If all men are *naturally* religious (even when they are avowed secularists and atheists), and if all religions (and ideologies) give equal access to the transcendent, then this must imply that there is a more or less seamless transition from (man's) nature to (God's grace)»<sup>130</sup>. But in the case of a religion, such as Christianity, which «raises a truth claim... over against the truth claims of all the other religions» then «grace is somehow radically distinct from man's religious nature, without which grace man will wander in darkness until he encounters the true grace of the one true religion»<sup>131</sup>.

The question of the relationship between nature and grace cannot be seen independently of the relationship between man and the Church. Oakes holds that De Lubac «altered the terms of this debate» for Catholics, which is why Milbank's study of De Lubac's theology of grace «is particularly welcome»<sup>132</sup>. Oakes summarizes Milbank's central thesis by way of a quotation from *The Suspended Middle*: «If creation implies both autonomous being and entirely heteronomous gift, while grace implies a raising of oneself as oneself to the beyond oneself, then the natural desire of the supernatural implies the dynamic link between the two orders that constitutes spirit, such that this link is entirely an aspect of the Creation and entirely also the work, in advance itself, of grace with unites human creatures to the Creator»<sup>133</sup>.

Oakes observes that the principle objection to this contention of De Lubac and Milbank is how to preserve the gratuity of grace if the natural desire cannot be in vain. He points out that, for Milbank, De Lubac resolves the «paradox» of the spiritual creature by a *revisionary ontology*. For De Lubac, «the presence of spirit in the cosmos requires a revision in the standard terms under which the debates on grace and nature took place»<sup>134</sup>.

The spirit is a different kind of nature from other natural ones. As Oakes describes it, «*To be spirit is to be receptive*; moreover, it is to be *conscious* of reception»<sup>135</sup>.

Oakes sees that Milbank interprets St Thomas to view the relationship of nature and grace according to an image of an artist creating something out of a raw material. Citing Milbank, «Just as human beings, fulfill, for example, the proper potential of wood by making a table and yet wood would never ‘tableize’ by itself, but needs to be ‘given’ the form of a table, so we are elevated (with the angels) by a divine art that does not abolish but fulfills our nature, though in a contingent, unexpected way»<sup>136</sup>.

Milbank is not content, however, merely to establish a link between nature and grace in this way. Oakes posits that Milbank’s book also sustains three other ancillary theses: 1) De Lubac’s theology was actually condemned by *Humani generis*. 2) Von Balthasar’s theology is «not as consistently brilliant and revolutionary as De Lubac’s»<sup>137</sup>. 3) De Lubac and Von Balthasar did not let De Lubac’s revised ontology affect their ecclesiology. Because this thesis is principally about De Lubac, we will not consider this second thesis, and only touch lightly on the third.

The first thesis of Milbank is particularly bold, especially as De Lubac and his supporters all failed to see in *Human generis* a condemnation of De Lubac’s work. Oakes points out that Milbank uses the 1958 English translation by Rosemary Sheed of *The Mystery of the Supernatural*. A later English edition, published in 1998 by Crossroad, includes that translation but adds an essay by David Schindler which mentions the letter from Cardinal Bea on the order of Pope Pius XII to De Lubac to thank the French Jesuit for his work and encourage him on his path<sup>138</sup>.

Oakes questions Milbank’s interpretation of *Humani generis* as condemning De Lubac. He notes that, in the encyclical, «the pope is dealing with a pure hypothetical: He is condemning a denial of what God *could* (but did not in fact) do. De Lubac, however, is dealing solely with what God *did* do»<sup>139</sup>. Oakes notes that Pius XII introduces pure nature as a «*conceptual* safeguard to the *concept* of the supernatural», the utility of which De Lubac did not in fact deny<sup>140</sup>. Milbank, however, «does his best to obscure» the fact that De Lubac assents to this idea of pure nature. In *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, De Lubac writes, «it is said that a universe might have existed in which man... would have his rational ambitions limited to some lower, purely human, beatitude. *Certainly I do not deny it*. But having said that, one is obliged to admit... that in our world

as it is this is not the case»<sup>141</sup>. For Milbank, this passage comes from a book that is «a declension from the bolder statements in *Surnaturel*, a devolution of boldness allegedly due to de Lubac's craven obeisance to *Humani generis*»<sup>142</sup>. Oakes claims, on the contrary, that «de Lubac is only clarifying and nuancing a position he consistently maintained, but which required a more subtle formation to take account of what he had never denied but which needed stressing after the encyclical's publication»<sup>143</sup>. Oakes points out that Milbank insists on a «binary approach to de Lubac (pope vs. persecuted Jesuit)» which determines how he reads De Lubac<sup>144</sup>.

Oakes intuitively feels that Milbank's frustration with De Lubac's «capitulation to papal authority», which for the Anglican theologian ended up in a less radical account of the supernatural and an incoherent ecclesiology, is rooted in a «common motif of all liberal ecclesiologies». Oakes formulates that liberal ecclesiological motif: «the institutional and juridical aspects of the Church are always and by essence incompatible with the charismatic and sacramental»<sup>145</sup>. Milbank sees De Lubac's ecclesiology as «the snag that threatens to undo de Lubac's achievement». Oakes, in contrast, charges that «Milbank's ecclesiology of binary opposites (to the extent he reveals it in his laconic asides)... threatens to undo his critique of De Lubac»<sup>146</sup>. Oakes rightly asserts that one cannot read De Lubac's theology of the supernatural apart from his ecclesiology, especially as developed after the Second Vatican Council.

If De Lubac fought what he saw as extrinsicism before the Council, he just as adamantly after it fought an intrinsicism which «so fuses nature and grace that anything natural becomes, by the very fact that it *is* natural, a form of grace, which again justifies secular man!»<sup>147</sup>. Given Radical Orthodoxy's evacuation of a properly philosophical or secular sphere from theology, and Milbank's radicalized reading of De Lubac, Oakes touches on a neuralgic point here. Milbank risks the very intrinsicism that De Lubac's ecclesiology fought against. For Oakes, this ecclesiology is not incoherent with De Lubac's theology of the supernatural. On the contrary, «Intrinsicism comes to the opposite conclusion as extrinsicism but uses the same logic»<sup>148</sup>, a logic which ends up justifying secular independence from religion.

While Oakes admits that Milbank's book is «provocative and worth reading», he also proposes that «its theses are too controversial, its citation of the supporting literature too cursory, its formulations too gnomic, its exposure to the total corpus of de Lubac's writings too sketchy, to make the book convincing»<sup>149</sup>.

### 3.2. *Hütter*

The other article in the Book Symposium on Feingold's work chosen for consideration here is by Reinhard Hütter. He begins his article by identifying the exact problematic that underlies the discussion of the supernatural problematic.

Is human nature, due to its constitutive end being genuinely transcendent, already originally graced in a way such that the inchoate dynamic fulfillment of this end must be understood as an intensification –albeit an infinite intensification– of this original grace to its eventual fulfillment and vice versa, the original grace as nothing else than the very anticipation of the eventual fulfillment? In short, isn't it all a matter of fundamentally the same grace, just of gradations in intensity? Isn't human nature itself most fundamentally but a function of grace?<sup>150</sup>

Hütter notes this way of conceiving the problem in Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185-254), Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335-ca. 394), De Lubac and Milbank, as well as the Russian Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944). It is very different than the vision held by St Augustine, St Thomas, and the Thomistic commentatorial tradition, which held that

because the human being has been made capable of this [supernatural] end (*capax Dei*) by God, human nature is in no way transmuted into something else by such an end. However, since this end utterly transcends every aspect of created human nature, there can be no innate natural desire whatsoever in the human being for this end... To perfect human nature instead of transmuting it, this gift from above must indeed be met by a corresponding conditional desire, hence a desire not *innate* to human nature itself, but *elicited*. This unique, conditional openness to the supernatural, the attainment of God, has been understood as a specific obediential potency, *specific* because of the very constitution of the human rational soul and its intellective and volitional faculties<sup>151</sup>.

It was these two divergent schools of thought on the supernatural question which were at stake in the debate over *Supernatural*. They are also at stake in the renewal of that debate that Hütter suggests has been awoken anew by the publication of the interventions of the Toulouse Colloquium, Feingold's doctoral dissertation and Milbank's book.

Hütter's article centers around three main observations. His first observation is that Feingold's work should be taken seriously. He notes that this

book is «a study more extensive in scope than *Surnaturel*»<sup>152</sup> and challenges De Lubac's widely accepted charge that Cajetan had falsified St Thomas on the natural desire for God. Hütter also notes that this challenge has not been welcomed in certain quarters, and cites Milbank's book as evidence. Hütter seems particularly vexed by Milbank's consistent referring to his adversary as Feinberg instead of Feingold<sup>153</sup>, but even more by the British professor's insinuation that Feingold supporters must also be supporters of «the Spanish Inquisition, a defender of the Papal States, and an admirer of the Franco-, Vichy, and Pinochet regimes in addition to anything else implied by association as arch-reactionary»<sup>154</sup>. Such a visceral reaction on the part of Milbank, however, is understandable, for «very few of Milbank's readers will be able to double-check the all too quick dismissal of a serious piece of theological scholarship the implications of which are... less than supportive of Milbank's own project»<sup>155</sup>.

But why has Milbank, and by extension others in the theological establishment, reacted so vehemently to this work? Hütter goes several reasons. First, for many contemporary theologians, theology can only be done in a «historical-contextual and constructivist mode». A «propositional discourse as informed by metaphysical realism and discursive, conceptual argumentation» such as that of Feingold is dismissed as «outdated»<sup>156</sup>. The fact that Feingold in his work proceeds with just such a discourse as if Aristotelian Thomistic metaphysics had not been declared dead long ago provokes even those who, like Milbank, are interested in St Thomas' thought. Second, because Feingold writes in the style of a Thomistic commentator and not in the more narrative style common today, he is rejected. Far from what Milbank charges is «the equivalent of 'Protestant fundamentalism' and its propositional proof-texting», Feingold «insists on engaging De Lubac's own account» by way of the rigorous conceptual discourse of the Thomistic commentatorial tradition<sup>157</sup>.

Yet this obsession on the part of contemporary theologians with a narrative style of historical and hermeneutical approaches to theology was pointed out by Blessed Pope John Paul II to be insufficient for Catholic theology<sup>158</sup>. Hütter observes that, because Milbank is «unencumbered by the normative doctrinal commitments» that inform De Lubac and Feingold's work, he cannot fathom why Catholic theologians «operate under the presupposition that the dogmatic tradition as well as the living magisterium constitutively inform theology's formal object»<sup>159</sup>. As a result, Milbank is conditioned to see parts



of De Lubac's project as incomprehensible capitulations to authority. He then feels that he can dispense with magisterial pronouncements that De Lubac would never have dismissed in such a cursory fashion<sup>160</sup>.

Hütter's second observation is that the St Thomas presented by Milbank is not, shall we say, the Historical St Thomas, but an Aquinas mediated by what Hütter labels *radicalized Bulgakovian Lubacianism*. We have already observed how Milbank consciously seeks to radicalize De Lubac by bringing forth what he thinks are the logical consequences of De Lubac's thought the French Jesuit was too scared to formulate as such for fear of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Hütter also suggests that Milbank essentially views De Lubac's thought through the prism of Bulgakov, although he does not explain how<sup>161</sup>. For Milbank, the two gifts of created nature and graced nature «are to be seen in a continuum, a seamless dynamic of varying intensity, reflecting an ontological élan drawing the entire cosmos through humanity to beatitude»<sup>162</sup>. He also suggests that this cannot claim St Thomas, for whom there is clearly a double gratuity, as its patron.

Hütter writes that St Thomas presents four arguments which obviate the possibility of his being recruited as a patron for Milbank's scheme. First, the Angelic Doctor sustains that «human nature stands in need of the gratuitous will of God in order to be lifted up [*elevetur*] to God, since this is above its natural capability»<sup>163</sup>. Second, human nature stands in a passive relationship to the active specific agency of God, an agency which presupposes human nature and is distinct from both the creation of man *ex nihilo* and the *creatio continuans* by which God sustains the creature in being. Third, human nature is elevated to God by the *operations* of nature, intellect and will, and not by nature considered apart from those faculties. Fourth, St Thomas clearly distinguishes between an end proportionate to nature and another end which «exceeds all proportion and faculty of created nature»<sup>164</sup>. Hütter then claims that St Thomas «resists Milbank's attempt of assimilating his theology into the latter's radicalized Bulgakovian Lubacianism» for two more reasons. First, St Thomas conceives of nature as having «its own relative but proper integrity as an entailment of creation that ontologically obtains and is accessible to the intellect». Second, St Thomas' teaching on predestination is contrary to Milbank's vision of universal *apokatastasis*<sup>165</sup>.

Hütter's third observation is that Milbank rejects Feingold because he is convinced that the American theologian's object is to restore a Garrigou-Lagrange type position in which *convenientia* is seen as the «epistemological like-

lihood» of supernatural elevation. Yet this is not the case for Feingold, who espouses the more nuanced approach to *convenientia* as having more ontological than epistemological overtones, the same as the Toulouse Thomists praised by Milbank.

At the conclusion of these observations made in dialogue with Feingold and Milbank's work, Hütter indicates that several things have become clear as this debate continues. First, *apokatastasis* as understood by Bulgakov and Milbank is indeed the logical consequence of De Lubac's theology of the supernatural in *Surnaturel*. Second, the idea that the Renaissance Baroque commentatorial tradition has falsified the true thought of St Thomas must be abandoned. Third, a reading of St Thomas «reconstructed in light of an Areopagite ontology of participation, in order to help warrant the vision of a Bulgakovian Lubacianism» is not consistent with the actual texts of St Thomas.

The idea of De Lubac and Milbank, which practically concludes that «all is grace», does indeed necessitate that «everything that has been brought into being must have its end in God, by necessary ontological entailment»<sup>166</sup>. This idea, which Hütter calls a «grandiose speculative vision»<sup>167</sup>, is not, however, the teaching of the Scriptures or of the Catholic Church, which leads us to conclude then, that perhaps, *not everything is grace after all*.

### 3.3. Long

In 2010, Steven Long published a book entitled *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace*. Four of its five chapters are reprints of previous articles published elsewhere. The most important of these articles appeared in *Nova et vetera* in 2007, as part of the Book Symposium on Feingold's work, and is entitled, «On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy». Our examination takes in to account this article as well material from other articles as reprinted in *Natura Pura*.

Long notes at the outset that Roman Catholic theologians today, if they even consider the supernatural question at all, «incline to accept an account of the relation of nature and grace that dissolves the entire structure of human nature and its proportionate end into a pure posit or limit concept»<sup>168</sup>. They deny that man has a proportionate natural end, or deny that it is intelligible apart from grace. Long asserts that this has come about, not because of a certain understanding of grace, but from a warped understanding of nature.

Against these theologians, Long claims, «nature is not merely a negative concept, a sort of empty theological Newtonian space providing a hollow ‘place’ or vacuole for grace»<sup>169</sup>.

Long alleges that De Lubac «inherits a reduced and anti-theistic idea of ‘nature’» and an «absolutization of the libertarian idea that human freedom lies naturally outside the divine causality and providence»<sup>170</sup>. Because of this, De Lubac considered it essential to deny a natural proportionate end to human nature distinct from the supernatural one. Long asserts that the pre-suppositions De Lubac harbored about nature were false. The objective Long presents for himself is the recovery of the idea of pure nature.

Long defines pure nature in the following way by two descriptions. For him it is the doctrine «that even here and now, in the concrete order, there is impressed upon each human person a natural order to the proximate, proportionate, natural end from which the species of man is derived, an end that is in principle naturally knowable and distinct from the final and supernatural end». It also shows that «the human person could *without injustice* have been created with this natural ordering alone, outside sanctifying grace, *in puris naturalibus*, and without the further ordering of man to supernatural beatific vision»<sup>171</sup>.

For Long, this teaching on pure nature is that of St Thomas and the Thomistic commentators, the same teaching that Feingold vindicates as «a potent challenge for those who assume –on the warrant of De Lubac’s claim– that most of St Thomas’ commentators have preferred ‘Renaissance corruptions’ to the genuine teaching of Aquinas»<sup>172</sup>. Long claims that Feingold’s work «establishes both systematically and exegetically» that this contention of De Lubac and his followers is false. Among De Lubac’s followers, Long singles out Milbank and his book *The Suspended Middle* for perpetuating the falsehood.

For Long, the falsehood of De Lubac and Milbank «fails to discern the larger stage on which the loss of nature as a theonomic principle has been played, and the distortive results it has both in prejudicing the nature/grace question, and for theology as a whole»<sup>173</sup>. One of Long’s central themes is that nature is not a *vacuole* for grace, a kind of non-entity suspended in the middle of the supernatural. For him, nature is a principle which he terms *theonomic*<sup>174</sup>. Nature is not to be conceived as a vacuole for grace independent of God. For Long, St Thomas clearly taught that «human nature is defined in its species in relation to the natural and proximate end as distinct from the supernatural

beatific end»<sup>175</sup>. St Thomas' teaching that man possesses *potentia obedientialis*, which explains how supernatural acts are our own, and at the same time brought about by grace<sup>176</sup>. Because De Lubac thought of *potentia obedientialis* as a «mere generic susceptibility to miracle»<sup>177</sup>, and not the way St Thomas thought of it, De Lubac rejects it.

Long notes that part of the difficulty in assessing St Thomas' thought is the existence of the two series of texts which seem to present two varying interpretations of natural desire. Because De Lubac ignores the second set of texts, he does not pick up on the fact that for St Thomas, God is man's natural end, but as First Cause of effects, not as The Triune God of Revelation. Long argues that, «failure to attend to such texts naturally inclines one to read the first set of texts... as straightforward and unproblematic, whereas in Thomas they exist within a wider philosophical and theological context necessary to their interpretation»<sup>178</sup>. That context is precisely how St Thomas considers man as an intellectual creature.

De Lubac's reading of the first series of texts does raise very important questions. Long lists two. First, *what is the natural desire for God and what is its object?* Second, *what does it mean for this desire to be natural?* De Lubac rejects Cajetan's answers to these questions, charging him with creating a «layer cake» of nature and grace. Long sustains that Cajetan actually suggests «that the natural desire for God is *modalized* by the state in which nature exists, so that this desire would be found in one way had God not created man from the beginning within the privileged life of sanctifying grace, and is found in another in the context of man's creation in the state of grace and of the data of supernatural revelation»<sup>179</sup>. This idea of modalization is important. The natural desire for God, which for Long is specified by natural knowledge, consequent on the ordination of natural intellect to being, elicited upon that knowledge and not efficacious of itself to reach God, exists in different ways. Apart from Revelation, the natural desire for God would exist, but only on the condition of its possibility. With Revelation, that changes. The desire is no longer conditional upon the possibility of knowing the cause of effects; under grace, it becomes the possibility of reaching the God of Revelation. «The *ratio* of cause of these effects is incorporated within the graced desire of God as God»<sup>180</sup>. In consequence, «this idea of the modalization of the natural desire according to the states in which it may be found, contextualizes it in relation to grace»<sup>181</sup>. Grace, then, while it is extrinsic to human nature, does work within human nature to elevate it.

Long finds the idea of nature as a vacuole particularly abhorrent. For him, it «seems to make the doctrine of Nicea to be unintelligible»<sup>182</sup>. The Nicean definition of the union of divine and human natures in Christ makes De Lubac's understanding of human nature circular. It would be tantamount to saying, «The Person of the Word assumed the nature that is defined by its being assumed by the Person of the Word»<sup>183</sup>. Long also notes that, while it is true that St Thomas held that there was only one supernatural end for man, the beatific vision, that does not «rule out an end proportionate to nature that is further ordered in grace to the ultimate supernatural finality»<sup>184</sup>.

Long has a developed understanding of what nature is and how it can be applied to the supernatural question. Nature is the «preamble to grace, and not merely its postscript», as he implicitly accuses De Lubac of making nature into merely a postscript to grace, or «*the point without magnitude that terminates the line of grace*»<sup>185</sup>. Furthermore, De Lubac's idea of nature «anticipating grace» is incoherent with the fact that «[s]ince powers are distinguished by acts, and acts by objects, and objects by ends, to distinguish between the two orders is to acknowledge that the natural end is distinct from, and less perfect than, the supernatural end»<sup>186</sup>. In fact, it is precisely sanctifying grace which orders nature in a causally efficacious way to its supernatural end. In consequence, sin does not revert man back to a state of pure nature, even though it does harm man's nature. The way in which man is naturally ordered to God is less than the way he is ordered to God as his supernatural end by grace. But the fact that man reaches God, in his human nature, by grace, indicates that nature «is not an arena of autonomy from God: all created being and action derive from God as First Cause»<sup>187</sup>.

Long assimilates Feingold's interpretation of St Thomas that man's natural desire for God is an elicited one consequent upon knowledge of God as First Cause and that this desire is perfected only by grace, to bring man to his supernatural end, the God of the beatific vision. What Long adds to Feingold's account is that this truth also tells us something about human nature itself: it is a preamble to grace which is still under the law of God. Nature, then, is a theonomic principle, and man is not merely an autonomous creature who can live in a world entirely separate from the law of God.

The discussion of man's orientation towards God necessarily involves what is called *natural teleology*, namely, the consideration of how man tends towards his end in a natural way. For Long, De Lubac and other «*theologians*

*no longer consider themselves in need of understanding natural motion and natural teleology.* Yet if ever there were a question that requires *natural teleology*... surely it is the question of the natural desire for God»<sup>188</sup>. Taking into account the natural teleology of man, *potentia obedientialis* «enables the creature to receive from God an actuation radically disproportionate to its unassisted nature and natural potencies». Seen in this way, the assertion of a connatural end for man proportionate to his nature and a *potentia obedientialis* in human nature is far from what De Lubac feared as naturalism. On the contrary, «it is the exaltation of the supernatural order that follows from these considerations»<sup>189</sup>.

In contrast, if one considers man without a connatural proportionate end, with no reference to a natural teleology, and refusing to admit a *potentia obedientialis* in human nature, one can see how De Lubac then had to posit a man with only a supernatural end and consequently was forced to see the alternative as a nature independent of God and the supernatural. But Long claims that the presuppositions upon which De Lubac based his rejection of those things do not obtain. De Lubac «was inclined to conflate insistence upon the distinction between the end proportionate to nature and the supernatural *finis ultimus* with a naïve naturalism»<sup>190</sup>. For Long, De Lubac essentially substitutes another conception of end for the philosophical definition of it in St Thomas, «for which the only justification was its putative efficacy in saving the Christian intellect from the danger of naturalism»<sup>191</sup>.

Precisely because man's nature is not «transmuted» into something else, but elevated by grace, it has to be capable of being elevated. This capacity, or potency, is the *potentia obedientialis*. It is a specific potency to be elevated to God, not a general potency to become anything. As Long describes it, «man may be elevated to the higher life of grace and the divine friendship, because the spiritual nature is such that with divine aid it may be so uplifted»<sup>192</sup>. If *potentia obedientialis* is seen as merely a transmutation of human nature (and rejected on that basis), then its fulfillment in supernatural life would result in the transmutation and loss of human nature. Long notes that, if this is what *potentia obedientialis* was, De Lubac would be right to reject it. But it is not. Therefore, «if natural powers are of themselves insufficient for *desiring* the supernatural good that exceeds the proportion of human nature, might this not mean the natural desire for God is in itself a desire specified not by uncreated nature –which is literally unknowable apart from revelation– but by that created nature in relation to whose existential dependence the reality of God is discovered?»<sup>193</sup>

Long maintains that De Lubac's incorrect reading of *potentia obedientialis* leads him to false conclusions about the relationship between nature and the supernatural in man. The American professor does, however, approve of the fact that De Lubac was motivated to his study for a good reason. The Enlightenment view of human nature as «a separate jurisdiction from divine authority and governance»<sup>194</sup> had become widespread. This view had gained credence even within Catholic theology, after Molina posited that it was «acceptable to view free human action as standing outside of divine governance and causality»<sup>195</sup>. Nature ceased to be a theonomic principle.

The question of how man was related to his end, *teleology*, was ignored. De Lubac raised the teleological question of man again, but for Long, he stressed it too much. We could also say that perhaps De Lubac extended a *supernatural teleological* view of man beyond its conceptual borders to subsume a valid *natural teleological* view of man. In other words, «De Lubac was correct in seeking the answer in teleology, and correct again in seeking an answer that would once again establish the theonomic character of natural order». At the same time, however, he was incorrect «in supposing that natural teleology in itself could be shoehorned into or equated with a supernatural trajectory». In doing so, he turned nature into a vacuole and «paradoxically completed the ontological evacuation of nature to which» he sought to respond<sup>196</sup>. De Lubac attempts to re-establish what Long calls the theonomic in nature, but «at the cost of a certain confusedly volatile conflation of supernatural and natural dynamisms»<sup>197</sup>. Long summarizes his critique of De Lubac's theology of the supernatural, as a «flight from intelligible metaphysical abstraction, the *reductio* of nature to a mere dialectical limit concept... so as to render it merely a 'Newtonian empty space' awaiting revelation and grace»<sup>198</sup>.

Without a rigorously metaphysical understanding of nature as a theonomic principle and not a vacuole for grace, it is easy to lapse into considering nature as «whatever the lingua franca of contemporary scientific culture and popular ideology may be»<sup>199</sup>. Apologetics, by which the Church proposes that the truths of the faith are not incompatible with human reason and human nature, becomes difficult, if not impossible. If nature is evacuated, as it were, by theology, by the lack of a proper vision of human nature, then when theology engages with those whose idea of nature is that it is *a priori* incompatible with faith, there is no common language with which to pass from nature to the supernatural. For Long, the loss of nature as a theonomic principle is not

merely a foible of De Lubac's theology. It spells disaster for the theological project to give reasons for the faith. The recovery of nature as a theonomic principle, and the subsequent renewal of theology, must include «the truths of metaphysics, natural philosophy and ethics, and anthropology» for Christian doctrine to be intelligible<sup>200</sup>. It cannot be left alone to a theology which somehow feels it can work outside of those disciplines.

### 3.4. *Balance of Reactions*

It is very clear that Feingold's work has exposed some of the lacunae of De Lubac's thought. In doing so, it is ironically a work parallel to *Surnaturel* itself. De Lubac sought to challenge a widely accepted notion of the relationship between nature and the supernatural. He sought to return to original sources to find what he thought would be a more authentic answer to the supernatural question, one which would have inestimable apologetic value for the Christian faith as lived in a world increasingly hostile to the supernatural. He also unwittingly, and perhaps naively, stirred up a hornet's nest of opposition. Likewise, Feingold has done exactly the same.

But where De Lubac sought to adumbrate the true relationship of nature and the supernatural by means of a historical-critical reading of St Thomas and other thinkers, Feingold sought instead to pierce the systematic core of those same thinkers. In doing so, Feingold presents an account which both affirms De Lubac's intuition on some points, but also mounts a devastating, and for some, definitive, critique of his thesis.

Many of De Lubac's critics charged that he «supernaturalized» the natural. Long claims that he emptied the natural of all meaning, turning it into something unintelligible. This critique of Feingold and Long does not square with Milbank's appropriation of De Lubac for his project of Radical Orthodoxy. It also does not sit well with many theologians who have uncritically accepted De Lubac's account of what happened after St Thomas in the supernatural debate. Because that account is the cornerstone of Radical Orthodoxy's self-understanding and much of the theological anthropology taught in faculties of theology today, this renewal of the debate has led to a critical examination, once again, of the thorny problem of the supernatural.

*Surnaturel* was not merely a novel thesis about the interpretation of the natural desire for God according to St Thomas. It was an indictment of an entire way of doing Catholic theology for centuries and a suggestion that some



of the basic givens of doctrine had to be rethought from top to bottom if theology were to provide a convincing apologetic for the faith. As Long has described, that project has ended up eviscerating the possibility of such an apologetic from the body of theology. *The Natural Desire to See God According to St Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* boldly infers that the crisis De Lubac's thesis caused theology was itself an unintentional, but nonetheless destructive, fabrication.

Long's *Natura Pura* builds on Feingold's analysis of St Thomas' teaching on the supernatural, but is principally about the urgency of recovering that classical Thomist account of nature and the supernatural he deems necessary for a fruitful dialogue with the postmodern world. He does not directly engage Milbank's criticism of Feingold at all. But it remains clear that, even though Long and Milbank both seek to engage postmodern man with an apologetic for orthodox Christian doctrine, they are diametrically opposed as to how to go about it. For Milbank, such an apologetic can only come about by denying any autonomy for the natural and any separation of the natural from the supernatural. For Long, the loss of nature as a theonomic principle and the conversion of nature into a vacuole of grace, which is how he views De Lubac (and we may assume, Milbank) on nature, makes such a dialogue impossible.

Hütter intuitively feels that the ensuing paralysis of theology has been caused by the submission of theology «to the thoroughly modern political geography of 'left' and 'right' in order to situate and prejudice matters doctrinal and theological, a habit, surely by now as widespread as it is thoughtless... condemning matters of theological enquiry and discourse to... the final domestication of matters ecclesial and theological under the extrinsically superimposed rubrics of political liberalism»<sup>201</sup>. The *nouvelle théologie* began as an attempt to allow for a greater theological pluralism in the search for proposing the timeless doctrines of faith to modern man. The theology of the supernatural of De Lubac was crucial to that project. But hidden within that project were dynamics, unforeseen by anyone in the first half of the twentieth century, that, in collusion with the nihilism of post-modernism, endangered the very aim and purpose of the Catholic theology it so desperately hoped to renew.

The question now becomes, how can Catholic theology be freed from those dynamics to propose to the world a true understanding of the relationship between nature and the supernatural in man?

## 4. REINHARD HÜTTER AND THE CURRENT STATUS QUAESTIONIS

In 2009, *The Thomist* published an article of Duke University theologian Reinhard Hütter, «Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God: A Relecture of *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, c. 25 *Après* Henri De Lubac». The very title of this article is informative of Hütter's objective. First of all, it suggests that we are now in a time *après* De Lubac, which further intimates that the De Lubac moment, the hegemony of De Lubac as exegete of the supernatural question, is over. One can infer from Hütter's earlier dialogue with Feingold and Milbank that, for him at least, it is now time to move beyond, or at least around, De Lubac, and re-engage St Thomas stripped of its Delubacian/Milbankian declension. Second, he proposes a re-lecture, a fresh new examination of one of the key texts to interpreting St Thomas' thought on the supernatural.

We propose this article of Hütter as a kind of *status quaestionis* of the supernatural question as it has emerged from the initial forge of the debate as re-ignited by Feingold and Milbank. It should be said from the outset that such a proposition is bound to be controversial. As we have seen, the manuals of theology, histories of theology and articles about theology in the past thirty years have created a consensus generally positive about De Lubac's theology of the supernatural, even while recognizing some of its lacunae. The position of Feingold has entered upon this comfortable body of thought as a cold shower. There is no indication that it has been accepted widely in the theological academy. But the provocation is there, and it must be considered. Hütter to his credit sees that any further discussion of the supernatural after 2010 must take into account Feingold's work as surely as any discussion after 1946 had to take into account *Surnaturel*. In this way, Hütter can be said to give us some sense of the *status quaestionis* as the debate moves into the second decade of the Third Millennium of Christianity.

Hütter notes that De Lubac's thesis, which he summarizes as, «human nature tends in itself necessarily towards God»<sup>202</sup>, enjoyed widespread acceptance. The first challenges to that consensus, which Hütter identifies as the 2000 Toulouse Colloquium and the work *Le désir de Dieu: Sur les traces de saint Thomas*, by Georges Cardinal Cottier,<sup>203</sup> went unnoticed in the English-speaking world. The publication of Feingold's work in English was noticed because of his argument that «de Lubac's intervention, while arguably settling in a possibly irreversible way a once dominant minimizing interpretation of Aquinas, turns out not to have been the last word on this matter»<sup>204</sup>.

For Hütter, the opposing tendencies toward minimalist and maximalist interpretation of St Thomas on the natural desire for God come from reading the well-noted double series of texts in an opposing manner. Since, out of all of those texts, chapter 25 of *Summa Contra Gentiles* III tends to be the one key to the maximalist interpretation,<sup>205</sup> Hütter suggests that the same text can also be used to read the two series of texts as one, thus obviating the need to read them as two sets of texts engendering two opposing interpretations. In doing so, he also suggests that two now long-forgotten works, William O'Connor's *The Eternal Quest: The Teaching of St Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God* and Marie-Joseph Guillou's critique of De Lubac, can be useful in restoring a unitary vision of the texts, and by extension, a unified vision of St Thomas on the natural desire for God<sup>206</sup>.

For Hütter, it is important to realize that the material to be found in SCG III is «a metaphysical inquiry into the *ontological structure of created substance*»<sup>207</sup>. It is not about «the concrete givens of the one obtaining order of providence in which angels and humans *de facto* exist»<sup>208</sup>. As a result, an attempt such as that of De Lubac «to read particular statements or conclusions from Aquinas' precisely delimited metaphysical argumentation here as *prima facie* theological claims about the obtaining order of providence as it coincides with the economy of salvation can only obfuscate the status of the conclusions reached;»<sup>209</sup>.

It is also important to take into consideration St Thomas' foreword to SCG IV. Here, he writes of two ways in which human intellect can come to know God. The first is «by a descent of perfections from God.» The second is «beginning with lower things and gradually ascending to the first cause;»<sup>210</sup>. The weakness of our intellect points to our inability to even know what the ways we can come to know God are. It follows then that there are two types of wisdom: a wisdom that comes from human enquiry, and a wisdom that comes from the gratuitous Revelation of the divine. God offers man a way by which «human beings are elevated to a perfect knowledge of him, the unmediated vision of God that effectively unites human beings to him such that they become 'partakers of the divine nature' (*divinae consortes naturae* [2 Pet 1:4])»<sup>211</sup>. The perfection of human nature, which that wisdom brings, is achieved by man's reaching his ultimate end. Thus, Hütter posits, there is a universal teleology which explains how every created being, by participating according to the mode of its being, returns to its source. This is another explanation of what is referred to classically as St Thomas' concept of *exitus-redditus*, that creation as an effect comes forth from God and returns to Him as its cause and source.

Within every creature, however, there is a dual perfection. The first perfection is in virtue of its nature, and the second in virtue of its operation. Thus, «[w]hatever is constitutive of intellectual beings (i.e., inherent to their primary perfection, their nature), is not in and of itself efficacious in achieving their final end, for intellectual beings are» fallible<sup>212</sup>.

Furthermore, St Thomas in SCG III introduces the idea of what constitutes an agent that intends and acts. Agency is an analogical term. Therefore, since «every effect has a certain similarity with its cause, creation indeed imitates its first cause in the most important respect: agency»<sup>213</sup>. Hütter quotes Cottier as pointing out the dynamic vision which links the agency of God and that of creatures, «Under the attraction of God, ultimate end and *summum bonum*, created being tends, in the measure according to which it is possible for it, toward a maximum of actualized being»<sup>214</sup>. That ultimate end is the good for which the creature acts. The metaphysical inquiry into how the primary perfection –the nature– of the created being acts by its secondary perfection –the operations of nature, which in man are intellect and will– clearly reveals something about the ontological structure of that nature. That nature possesses a specific capacity to be moved to its proper perfection. Hütter notes that this specific capacity in man is the intellect.

The end towards which man acts by means of the specific capacity that is his intellect is God. Because all things tend toward God *suo modo*, according to their mode of existing, the creature whose specific capacity is intellect tends to God via the intellect.

In SCG chapter 19, St Thomas introduces the concept of *similitudo*, that each thing tends towards being and act, towards its perfection and goodness, in the mode proper to it. Therefore, the intellectual creature, tends to God via the specific capacity of its intellect by way of a likeness to God, who is Pure Being and Pure Act.

This gleaning of various principles across the *Summa Contra Gentiles* allows Hütter to make a conclusion. There is a distinction between «those agents whose secondary perfection comes about simply by way of their *natures*» and those «whose secondary perfection comes about by way of *intellect*»<sup>215</sup>. In creatures without intellect, ontological appetite determines their end, much like the idea of *pondus naturae* discussed earlier. In creatures with intellect, the *ratio boni*, the reason for which they act towards the good, determines their end<sup>216</sup>. The good has to be explicit to the intellect by way of knowledge for the will to incline toward it as an end. As Hütter reformulates

this principle, «I can only be drawn by my rational appetite, the will, to a good that I first of all understand as a worthwhile end»<sup>217</sup>.

This divine intellect, which attracts created human intellect, is not so different from created human intellect that the two are «absolutely foreign to each other»<sup>218</sup>. As St Augustine wrote, «Just as we must acknowledge that the human soul is not what God is, so it is to be set down that among all things that God has created nothing is nearer to God» than man<sup>219</sup>. For this reason, human intellect is *capax Dei*, and its understanding, enabled from within, arises concretely from without. Although Hütter does not say so, it seems that this is where De Lubac understood that there was something in the nature of spirit that is the human intellect that enabled knowledge of God from within, as it were, man's ontological core. What De Lubac missed was that this was an interior enablement, or shall we dare to say, a *potentia obediens*, which only the agency of God through grace coming concretely from outside the human person could perfect into the elevation of human nature to God.

All of the above Hütter employs as a preamble to his exegesis of SCG chapter 25. There St Thomas writes, «an intellectual substance tends to divine knowledge as to an ultimate end.»<sup>220</sup> Because intellectual knowledge tends towards the most perfect intelligible object, «God must be the most perfect thing in the genus of the operation of understanding: hence it is the ultimate end of that being whose proper operation is *intelligere*»<sup>221</sup>. This is true as a metaphysical analysis of the ontological structure of the intellect, whether the operation of human intellect goes on in the state of Original Justice, in the state of Original Sin, or in the state of actual sin.

The operation of the appetite of nature cannot go on indefinitely; if it did, the *desiderium naturae* would be frustrated. So to what is that operation directed? For St Thomas, according to Hütter, «contemplation of the highest cause is the concrete terminus of the secondary perfection of the human intellect»<sup>222</sup>. The end of contemplation of the highest cause and the ontological structural possibility to attain it (intellect) «is the condition for the desire of nature (*desiderium naturae*) to tend towards its fulfillment by way of the appetite of nature (*appetitus naturae*), realized most eminently in the will, the rational appetite as it moves the intellect to its proper good and hence perfection in contemplating the most excellent object, the first cause»<sup>223</sup>. This movement of the will to contemplate via the intellect the First Cause causes wonder, *admiratio*. But since the First Cause is beyond what the intellect can reach, «the *felicitas* sought by way of metaphysical contemplation must neces-

sarily remain incomplete»<sup>224</sup>. Hence, natural desire is not ontologically prior to knowledge. Instead «it is its entailment and arises simultaneously with the intellect's encounter with reality»<sup>225</sup>.

The ultimate perfection of man, the terminus in which man's natural desire can rest, is that *beatitudo* which is attained only by grace. But this perfection of man in the beatific vision cannot be had without a nature for it be had in. The concrete order of historically existing man, as De Lubac describes what Hütter terms the extant order of providence, coincides with the economy of salvation, of how God acts in history to save man, not because of any exigency in human nature itself, but because of *convenientia*.

Hütter calls to mind the crux of Le Guillou's critique of De Lubac.

«[w]hile Aquinas indeed held the natural desire for the vision of God, this affirmation is fundamentally different from, albeit essentially related to, the desire for the supernatural, a desire elicited by the supernatural virtue of hope. The latter desire is fundamentally different because it is supernaturally elicited; however, it is essentially related to the natural desire, because it is that very natural desire (conditional by nature) that is presupposed as well as perfected by the supernaturally elicited desire»<sup>226</sup>.

But what remains then, to be said of nature in its own integrity relative to the supernatural? For Le Guillou, pure nature is not an invented nature which would have nothing to do with concretely existing man, as De Lubac claimed. Rather, *natura pura* «designates in our world the very structure proper to the created intellect»<sup>227</sup>.

In other words, pure nature is not a pure fantasy of a man who can happily exist apart from God. Pure nature is not merely a control concept used to assure that God's freedom in granting grace is preserved from some notion that human nature somehow can demand that grace. Pure nature is purely what man's nature is, considered in its own integrity, relative to the life of supernatural grace in the beatific vision to which it is called, and which can be attained only through the elevation of that nature through grace.

Hütter's article allows us to come to some conclusions about the theology of the supernatural that are different than the ones to which De Lubac came. We can affirm wholeheartedly with De Lubac that man is *capax Dei*. He is ontologically oriented towards God and in him is to be found a fittingness, a *convenientia*, as an «opening inscribed into the very core of the nature of the human *intellectus*, created» in the image of God<sup>228</sup>. But, against De Lubac,

we must also affirm other things. First, precisely because there is one final end, we must distinguish between two orders of finality. The gratuity of the ultimate end can only be preserved if there is a finality which corresponds to the natural faculties of created intellect. Without this natural finality, there is no potency which grace can presuppose and perfect in man's nature. If man is to be elevated to his supernatural end as a man, and not to be transmuted or re-created into something he is not, the gratuitous transcendence of the final supernatural end presupposes that man has a nature which is integral, and also open to such an elevation. Hütter notes that, for St Thomas, «there cannot exist an innate, unconditional natural desire for the supernatural»<sup>229</sup>. For Hütter, De Lubac, and by extension Milbank, has «overshot the goal.» The correct way to describe the relationship of human nature to the supernatural in the economy of salvation, in this world God has created is this: *The natural, elicited, conditional and imperfect desire for God is perfected, by sanctifying grace, into the unconditional desire of the infused virtue of hope to see the God whom I know by faith as He is in Himself and as He is able to give Himself to me*<sup>230</sup>.

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## Notes

1. L. FEINGOLD, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed., Sapientia Press, Ave Maria, 2010. Also see 1st ed. Rome: Apollinare Studi, 2001.
2. J. MILBANK, *The Suspended Middle: Henri De Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*, Eerdmans Press, . Grand Rapids, 2005 and SCM Press, London, 2005. The SCM Press version is used for this thesis. See also the French translation, *Le milieu suspendu: Henri de Lubac et le débat sur le surnaturel*. Olivier-Thomas Venard, trans. Cerf, Paris, 2006.
3. The authors whose articles are chosen for study here are the following: Edward T Oakes, American Jesuit, Chester & Margaret Paluch Professor of Theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary; Reinhard Hütter, German Catholic layman, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Steven Long, American Catholic layman, Professor at Ave Maria University, Ave Maria, Florida. See E. OAKES, «The Paradox of Nature and Grace: On John Milbank's *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*», *Nova et vetera*, English edition, vol. 4, n° 3 (2006) 667-96. R. HÜTTER, «*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei – Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold's and John Milbank's Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God», *Nova et vetera* 5, n° 1 (2007) 81-132, and «Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God: A Relecture of *Summa Contra Gentiles* III, c. 25 *Après* Henri De Lubac», *The Thomist* 73 (2009) 523-91. LONG, Steven. *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010 and «On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy», *Nova et vetera*, English edition, vol. 5 no 1 (2007) p. 133-84, reprinted in *Natura Pura*, 10-51.  
Two other important authors who have contributed reactions to this debate, but whose work is not studied here because it substantially contains what is found in the above authors, are: Haram Goris, Catholic Theological University at Utrecht, The Netherlands and Guy Mansini, American Benedictine of St Meinrad Seminary in St Meinrad, Indiana. See H. GORIS, «Steering Clear of Charybdis: Some Directions for Avoiding 'Grace Extrinsicism' in Aquinas», *Nova et vetera*, English edition, vol. 5, n° 1 (2007) 67-80 and G. MANSINI, «The Abiding Theological Significance of Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*», *The Thomist* 73 (2009) 593-619.
4. Reinhard Hütter is German, but associated with Duke University in the United States. Haram Goris is Dutch and teaches in the Netherlands, but publishes in English in American journals. Thus, both can be associated with the Anglophone theological world even they are not USA or UK nationals.
5. Among the authors chosen for study here are included Roman Catholic clergy. While no female theologian is considered here, it should be observed that they have been considered earlier in this thesis. Their voice is also heard among the theologians associated with Radical



Orthodoxy. As more female theologians come into their own in the theological academy, it is devoutly to be wished that they will also bring their professional expertise to bear on these same questions.

6. Chapters 1-3 deal specifically with St Thomas on the natural desire for God. Chapters 4-5 explore Scotus and Denis the Carthusian. Chapters 6-8 are a detailed exploration of Cajetan, followed in Chapter 9 by the Cajetanian thesis of Sylvester of Ferrara and Chapter 10 by the Scotist theses of Domingo de Soto and Francisco de Toledo. In Chapters 11-12 Feingold speaks of the formation of a consensus in the works of Medina, Bañez, Suárez, and the post-Suarezian manualist tradition. In Chapters 13 he revisits Jansen. During all of these chapters he unfolds his argument with a view to the core of his thesis, the comprehensive critique of De Lubac in Chapters 14-16 and the Conclusion.
7. FEINGOLD, xxiii.
8. *Ibidem*.
9. *Ibid.*, xxiv.
10. *Ibidem*.
11. *Ibid.*, xxx.
12. *Ibid.*, xxxiv.
13. *Ibid.*, xxxv.
14. *Ibid.*, xxxvi.
15. *Ibid.*, 11.
16. *Ibidem*.
17. *Ibidem*.
18. One could object: is there a distinction here between man as a rational animal *in se* and man as a rational animal *in usu*? A child who has not attained the use of reason, a person in a coma, or a developmentally challenged individual are rational animals by definition because they share the nature of man. How is knowledge, however, elicited in them? Can a man incapable of intellectual knowledge be said to elicit the good apprehended by it? Does the possession of a rational appetite exclude the possession of a sensitive and a natural appetite? Here is where Feingold introduces the idea of desire as present in the notion of potency itself. Because the above examples are rational animals *in se*, they have a potency, a possibility, for rational knowledge. Yet if the soul can desire its object as an object of the innate natural appetite, always present in potency as an unconscious tendency, as Feingold maintains (p. 14), then the fact of that potency points to the desire as appetite. But in this case, it does not seem to be elicited.
19. *Ibid.*, 14. Feingold's distinction, however, is from Cajetan, and not from St Thomas. He refers the reader to Cajetan's Commentary on ST I q80 a1 ad 3 n 5 (Leonine ed., 5:283b) and I q19 a1 n6 (4:232b). Considering that the crux of the discussion is that this distinction was read into St Thomas by Cajetan, it seems that Feingold here takes Cajetan's distinction as an *a priori* upon which the rest of the discussion is predicated. Surely, if Feingold's intention here is to discern St Thomas' thought on the matter, it is unsafe to predicate the rest of his own unfolding of the problematic on a contention of Cajetan which is the whole reason for the debate in De Lubac in the first place.
20. *Ibid.*, 16.
21. *Ibid.*, 18.
22. One assumes here that Feingold means that an elicited appetite can be said to be natural, prior to knowledge, on basis of potency. Otherwise, an appetite is only elicited upon the arousal of knowledge of a good, when this potency is reduced to act.
23. *Ibid.*, 20. Cfr. ST I-II q10, a2.
24. *Ibid.*, 21. Cfr. *De malo*, q6.
25. *Ibid.*, 22.
26. *Ibid.*, 23. Cfr. ST III q18, a5, III Sent., d 17, q1,a2, q1a 1. Cfr. Luke 22.42 (ESV).

27. *Ibidem*.
28. *Ibid.*, 25.
29. Feingold notes that some deny that a natural desire can be conditional, referring to LAPORTA, «Les notions d'appétit naturel et de puissance obédientielle», *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 5, n° 9 (1928) 269.
30. *Ibid.*, 44.
31. *Ibid.*, 44-5.
32. Yet is it clear that St Thomas bases his thesis that we have a supernatural end on anything but Revelation, even if he could show that it is not contrary to reason?
33. *Ibid.*, 45. One is hard-pressed to understand how the right answers to these questions point to a valid interpretation of St Thomas, for whom these questions were either irrelevant or not worthy of consideration. If these questions are not answered by St Thomas, even if answers to them are given in accord with other principles found in St Thomas, that does not indicate that the answers to them correctly interpret St Thomas. Those answers merely indicate the correctness of an elaboration of those answers in a framework that arguably might be amenable to St Thomas.
34. Cfr. FEINGOLD, 81-182, and *Surnaturel*, 273-5. One wonders why De Lubac, who charged Cajetan with falsifying St Thomas on the question natural desire and putting theology on a trajectory which would ultimately end up in the dissolution of Christian civilization, did not spend more energy exegeting Cajetan's texts. This relative paucity of material has led many, from Alfaro to Feingold, to question De Lubac's interpretation of Cajetan.
35. It is not within the scope of this thesis to describe Scotus' thought on the natural desire to see God. Feingold provides an ample summary of his thought in p. 47-65. Cfr. A.B. WOLTER, «Duns Scotus and the Natural Desire for the Supernatural», *New Scholasticism* 23 (1949) 315-6. It has been suggested that De Lubac's thesis is essentially Scotist. Cfr. *Surnaturel*, 264-5, where De Lubac writes of Scotus on the theory of the impeccability of the angel. The question of whether De Lubac's thesis is concordant with Scotus aside, it is clear that De Lubac hardly ever refers to Scotus.
36. *Ibid.*, 180. Feingold refers the reader in notes 25-26 to a book by B. HALLENSLEBEN, *Communicatio: Anthropologie und Gnadenlehre bei Thomas de Vio Cajetan*. Reformationgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 123. Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1985, esp. 299-343. She notes on p. 31 on her work, contrary to De Lubac, «To seek in Cajetan's work for rationalistic reductions, the emptying of traditional truths of faith, deviations and distortions from Thomas Aquinas, has evidently become a preconceived idea.» It could be said that Feingold in this thesis seeks to challenge that preconceived idea.
37. *Ibid.*, quotation is from Feingold, not Cajetan.
38. *Ibid.* NB. The words in brackets have been added to clarify the text within the context of our discussion here, and the italicization of the word *possibility* is ours, and does not pertain to the original text of Feingold.
39. Interestingly enough, Feingold references, on p. 133 note 94, Alfaro's *Lo natural y lo sobrenatural*, p. 112-29, as corroboration for his thesis, but seems to fail to notice that in these pages, Alfaro is referring to Cajetan's erroneous interpretation of St Thomas in his commentary on ST I q 76 a 1 ad 6, a text that Feingold does not consider.
40. Scotus relates potencies to their corresponding perfections. Thus, for him, as Feingold observes on p. 181, «to deny a properly *natural* potency for the vision of God or to deny an innate *natural* inclination to it would be to deny that the vision of God represents true perfection for human nature.»
41. Could one say then that De Lubac is guilty of a sleight-of-hand trick here, condemning Cajetan for a theory not in accord with St Thomas when the principles upon which the theory are based are assumed to be of St Thomas, when they are in reality of Scotus?
42. *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

43. *Ibid.*, 276.
44. Feingold's interpretation of the commentators seems to be logical, given that he understands desire in the context of man's rational appetite. Yet, we ask again, does the existence of rational appetite in man suppress the existence of a natural and a sensitive appetite in man as well? If it does, then Feingold's patient reconstruction of the steps to arrive at the Thomistic consensus is worthy of admiration. If it does not, then De Lubac had intuited something that cannot be ignored. If man preserves a natural appetite alongside his rational appetite, then the idea of the natural desire being a *pondus naturae* not unlike the tendency of a rock to fall downwards by gravity is not unintelligible. It would still beg the question, however, of how grace could be gratuitous.
45. *Ibid.* Feingold could also argue the reverse: that only if intellect and will were removed from man could the desire for God be considered natural as natural is considered with respects to beings without intellect and will.
46. FEINGOLD, 295-395 and 397-447, respectively.
47. *Ibid.*, 296.
48. *Ibid.*, 314. Cfr. *Surnaturel*, 15 and *Augustinisme*, 1.
49. BOYER, 387, cited in Feingold, 314 note 69.
50. FEINGOLD, 314.
51. *Ibid.*, 322. For St Thomas, Feingold refers to ST I-II q62, a1c and ad3; I-II q63, a3; *De virtutibus*, q. un., a 10; SCG III ch. 150, n. 5 (#3229) and ch. 151, n. 4 (#3237); *De veritate* q27, a2, a5; *De malo* q5, a1; III Sent d23, q1, a4, q1a 3; II Sent d33, q2, a1. For De Lubac, see *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 55-6, 85-6 and *Surnaturel*, 393. Cited in Feingold, 323, notes 23-27.
52. *Ibid.*, 327.
53. *Ibid.*, 328. Feingold actually only lists nine of the supposedly ten texts in which St Thomas uses the term *desiderium naturae*: STI q12, a1; SCG III ch. 48, n. 12 (#2257); Comp. theol. II, ch. 8; De regno ad regem Cypri, I, ch 8; In I Eth., lect. 15, n. 10 (#186); In II Cor. 5:4 (#158-9); SCG III, ch. 25, n. 9 (#2063); In I Eth. Lect. 16, n. 16 (#202); ST II-II q83, a6.
54. *Ibid.*, 339. Cfr. *Mystery*, 31, 55-6., cited in note 91.
55. *Ibid.*, 342. Cfr. ST I-II q 113, a10; III q9, a2 and *Mystery*, 31, 55, cited in p. 342, note 102, and p. 343, note 107.
56. FEINGOLD, 344, 346, 347. Cfr. *Mystery*, 85-6 cited on p. 344, note 111; ST I q62, a2 cited on p. 346, note 121.
57. *Ibid.*, 354.
58. *Ibid.*, cfr. *Mystery*, 102, cited on p. 354, note 144, and SCG III ch. 25, 50. Feingold also refers to R. BERZOSA, *La teología del sobrenatural*, 165-6 on p. 355, note 148 and C. RUINI, *La trascendenza della grazia nella teologia di S. Tommaso d'Aquino*, Rome: Università Gregoriana Editrice, 1971, 297 n72 on p. 356, note 150.
59. *Ibid.*, 358-9, 360. Cfr. *Surnaturel*, 467-9, 471, and *Mystery*, 190 cited on pp. 359-60 in notes 168-70.
60. *Ibid.*, 378. Cfr. *Surnaturel*, 486, cited on p. 377, note 220, and ST I q 21 a1 ad 3; SCG II ch. 28-9, n.17-18 (#1060-1), cited on p. 378, notes 222-3.
61. *Ibid.*, 385. Cfr. *Mystery*, 55, 58-61, 102, 167, cited on p. 385 in notes 247-50.
62. *Ibid.*, 386. Cfr. *Surnaturel*, 483-4, *Mystery*, 73, Berzosa, 162, cited on p. 386 in note 251, and ST I q41, a2, ad 3-4, cited in note 252.
63. *Ibid.*, 387-8. Cfr. *Mystery*, 55, 73, 207, 102, cited on p. 387 in notes 255-6 and STI-II q 62, a1; I-II q62, a3c and ad3; I-II q363, a3; SCG III ch. 150, n° 5 (#3229), cited on p. 388 in note 257.
64. *Ibid.*, 392-5.
65. *Ibid.*, 440.
66. *Ibidem*.

67. *Ibid.*, 441-3. It should be noted that De Lubac also sought to uphold Feingold's fifth reason, to avoid the naturalization of heaven. But De Lubac thought that that it was pure nature which naturalized heaven, and as a result sought to ground wonder at heavenly things not in transcendence of God and the humility of man, but in the immanence of the supernatural and the dignity of man. In a sense, one can say that both Feingold and De Lubac are pursuing the same thing, to evoke wonder in man at the work of God in him. De Lubac's method for getting there, however, Feingold utterly rejects as untenable, unhelpful and not coherent with St Thomas. This leads us to a question, however: Does De Lubac intend to portray his theology of the supernatural as conceptually coherent with St Thomas? As he charges St Thomas with being the originator of the «ambiguity» of pure nature, it hardly is meaningful to charge De Lubac with infidelity to the Angelic Doctor when he does not set out to elaborate a thesis which is faithful to the letter of the Aquinate.
68. While Pickstock remains at Cambridge, Ward is now at Oxford and Milbank at Nottingham, still teaching theology.
69. J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Blackwell, London; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Blackwell, Oxford, 2006.
70. J. MILBANK, C. PICKSTOCK and G. WARD (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, Routledge, London, 1999. For a clear introduction to Radical Orthodoxy, see J. SMITH, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. For other seminal texts of Radical Orthodoxy, see the following: J. MILBANK, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. J. MILBANK and C. PICKSTOCK, *Truth in Aquinas*, Routledge, London, 2001. C. PICKSTOCK, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. T. ROWLAND, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*, Routledge, London, 2003. G. WARD, *Cities of God*, Routledge, London, 2000.
71. *Ibid.*, 2.
72. *Ibidem*.
73. *Ibid.*, 68.
74. Cfr. *Radical Orthodoxy*, 91-108.
75. L.P. HEMMING, *Radical Orthodoxy? – A Catholic Enquiry*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.
76. HEMMING, 9.
77. Or to put it more simply, a Roman Catholic can't ignore it, while an Anglican can.
78. MILBANK, *The Suspended Middle*, 79.
79. For a study of the engagement of Radical Orthodoxy with Protestantism, see J. SMITH and J. OULTHIS (eds.), *Creation, Covenant and Participation: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
80. J. MILBANK, «The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy», in HEMMING, 36.
81. F. KERR, «A Catholic Response to the Programme of Radical Orthodoxy», in HEMMING, 56.
82. *Ibidem*.
83. *Communio* refers to a journal founded in 1972 by De Lubac, Von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, roughly described as heir to the *ressourcement* wing of the *nouvelle théologie*. *Concilium* refers to a journal founded in 1964 by Edward Schillebeeckx, which can be described as heir to the *aggiornamento* wing of the *nouvelle théologie*. A drastic oversimplification seeks to label the former as conservative and the latter as liberal. It can be stated however, that many contemporary Catholic theologians do seem to identify more with one over the other journal. One wonders why Kerr has not referred to *Nova et vetera*, the journal founded in 1926 by Charles Journet which represents contemporary Thomism, or the similar *Revue Thomiste*.
84. John MILBANK, *The Suspended Middle: Henri De Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*, SCM Press, London, 2005, 5. Milbank notes on p. 5 that the term *ontology* was coined in the seventeenth century to «denote a purely philosophical classification of being, cognitively prior to a consideration of the divine.»

85. *Ibidem*.
86. *Ibid.* Aside from the fact that Milbank describes as a ontological a discourse which he also claims is a non-ontology, Milbank also confusingly speaks of a «super-nature» of divinity. Where does De Lubac speak of divinity as a «super-nature»? One can speak of the divinity as being super-natural (adjectival form) with respect to creatures, and that the divinity is natural with respect to Itself, but what does it mean for divinity to be a super-nature?
87. *Ibid.*, 11.
88. Cfr. VON BALTHASAR, 15.
89. *Ibid.*, 24. Yet is the fact that De Lubac argues for a certain interpretation of St Thomas on the natural desire for God without an extensive analysis of the pertinent texts not relevant to adequately evaluating De Lubac? Need the fact of its relevance be a mere pretext for neo-Scholastic exploitation?
90. *Ibid.*, 23.
91. *Ibid.*, 33.
92. *Mystery*, 110-11, 41, cited in MILBANK, 35.
93. MILBANK, 36.
94. *Ibid.*, 37. Note that on p. 80, Milbank writes, «De Lubac's thesis is more Thomist than Scotist» in disbelief that «die-hard neo-Thomists» like Feingold still insist that DeLubac's thesis is Scotist. Milbank appears here to hold contradictory views on whether De Lubac's thesis is Scotist or not.
95. *Ibid.*, 39. This sounds much like Nicolas' idea of a *passerelle* between nature and the supernatural.
96. *Ibid.*, 42.
97. *Ibid.*, 47.
98. *Ibid.*, 46-7.
99. This is important for Radical Orthodoxy, for whom all knowledge is seen in terms of divine illumination. From a Thomistic perspective, however, one could point out that the transfiguration of the soul by the possession of the beatific vision does not explain how, in the soul who is in the state of grace but does not possess the beatific vision, for whom the soul has not been entirely transfigured into the light, gratuity can still be preserved.
100. *Ibid.*, 104. Milbank seems to minimize the role of the Magisterium in the life of the Catholic theologian, along with that of papal authority. For him, presumably as an Anglican, De Lubac's obedient reworking of his thesis was a lamentable capitulation to unjust restriction by an unjust authority, which undercut the French Jesuit's creativity and risked sending his system into incoherence. One wonders whether De Lubac, as stung as he was by the machinations around him, would view the role of papal authority and the Magisterium in the life of the theologian in quite the same light.
101. *Ibid.*, 107-8. At the end of his 108 page book on De Lubac, Milbank suggests something quite extraordinary as a key for understanding what he indicates is a real hidden intention of De Lubac as well as an open one of Radical Orthodoxy. «Never specifically consented to by De Lubac, but always exerting its own original lure, was Origen's vision of *apocatastasis*: the universal Christological salvation of spirits and through this, the eternal re-establishment of all things.» p. 108. If De Lubac's covert intention were to pave a way for a recovery of this doctrine of Origen, then Milbank is right in intuiting that De Lubac's theology of the supernatural provides the theological basis by which *apocatastasis* can be said to be coherent with the activity of the supernatural. It would also validate Cardinal Siri's deep-seated suspicion of De Lubac as a closeted heretic. But if Milbank is wrong, and that was never De Lubac's intention, then De Lubac's reputation as an orthodox theologian remains intact. Milbank, by contrast, would be seen as dangerously extrapolating from De Lubac a desire to advance a theory which, even if Radical Orthodoxy were to find it congenial, the Roman Catholic

- Church would not hesitate to condemn, as she condemned Origen for it in 543. Cfr. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 203-11.
102. Cfr. FEINGOLD, 315, note 71, citing *At the Service of the Church*, 184.
  103. MILBANK, 25-7, note 10.
  104. *Ibid.* Let us observe two things here. First, Feingold does not deny that the beatific vision is the *telos* of the spiritual creature. The apparent omission of what Milbank calls the «ontological and neoplatonizing prelude» is justifiable given that Feingold is attempting to demonstrate that natural desire is elicited, which he draws from paragraphs 11-13, and not attempting to deny that the desire is natural. Second, Milbank declares that De Lubac is right to reject pure nature because St Thomas indicates that the beatific vision *has* to be the end of spiritual creatures because otherwise something lower than spiritual creatures would have God as their end, which is not fitting. But again, *desire* is predicated of man differently than it is of other creatures: it is an analogous concept, and it is that analogy that Feingold uses to advance his argument.
  105. It is true that Feingold does not include this quote. It is also hard to see how that part of the quote would in any way disprove Feingold's thesis that the natural desire is an elicited one. Feingold starts the quote at «there resides in every man a natural desire to know the cause of any effect which he sees» because this is the key to understanding the desire as elicited. While it may be seen to give an «ontological context», to use Milbank's words, that does not mean that it is an «ontological desire.»
  106. *Ibid.* One is given to wonder what Milbank means by *ontological* when he uses the term «ontological context» and «ontological background.» That the natural desire for God exists, may point to its having an ontological correspondence to the human person. That does not make it natural in the sense of not being elicited, because the nature of the intellectual creature demands that such a desire be consequent upon the intellect.
  107. *Ibid.* Yet, as we have seen, the omitted sections do not call into question Feingold's interpretation of the quoted sections. For Milbank, the omitted sections prove the ontological nature of natural desire. Yet, Feingold does not question that the desire is natural. Because he recognizes the analogical character of nature and desire, Feingold cites what he cites to demonstrate that the natural desire is an elicited one. Also, after charging that Feingold proof-texts St Thomas like a Fundamentalist, Milbank then provides three quotes from St Thomas (ST I-II q5, a5, ad2, *De veritate* q 18, a1 ad 7, and ST III q9, a3) that are given as evidence of the desire being natural, something Feingold does not contest.
  108. *Ibid.* How is the natural desire to want to know the causes of effects, and then their essences, abstract?
  109. *Ibid.*, 79.
  110. *Ibid.*, 80. Cfr. J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Quodlibet* 17, a2
  111. *Ibidem.*
  112. *Ibid.* Milbank refers to S.T. BONINO, article «La théorie des limnes et le mystère du surnaturel chez saint Thomas d'Aquin» in the Toulouse Colloquium, *Controversy*, 117-54 (Eng. Ed), 131-66 (Fr. Ed.) It is unclear whether Milbank takes issue with how Bonino explains St Thomas on limbo, or whether he criticizes the very attempt to talk about limbo at all.
  113. *Ibid.*, 81.
  114. *Ibid.*, 83.
  115. He mentions Torrell and Narcisse specifically.
  116. *Ibid.*, 83-4.
  117. *Ibid.*, 84.
  118. *Ibid.*, 85.
  119. *Ibidem.*
  120. *Ibid.*, 84. Cfr. *Controversy*, 295-310. *Convenientia* is taken in the Scholastic sense of «fittingness.» It differs from a strict demonstration, and denotes that there is something within

the subject that means that what is predicated of it is fitting to it. In C.T. LEWIS and C. SHORT, *A Latin Dictionary. Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879, the entry for *convenientia* indicates that it is originally a Ciceronian term. It can be defined as «*a meeting together, agreement, accord, harmony, symmetry, conformity, suitability, fitness.*»

121. *Ibid.*, 86.
122. *Ibidem*.
123. This is essentially Feingold's criticism of De Lubac. Would that a similar dynamic not be repeated with *convenientia* in theological discussion.
124. MILBANK, 98.
125. *Ibid.*, 99. But if Providence governs man in a certain way, does Providence not guide man's nature to accomplish certain things? Are all of the actions of Providence to be considered grace in the human person, even if those actions are *natural* to the human person? And if this providential mode of dealing with spiritual creatures *includes* grace, does that not indicate that there is also the possibility that such a mode of governing *excludes* grace? We must note here that, *in itself* Providence is always supernatural *to us*, but the *effects* of Providence may be in either the natural or the supernatural order.
126. *Ibid.*, 100. The only engraced spirit the cosmos requires to be governed is the Uncreated Grace that is the Ipsum Esse Subsistens, God. If men or angels had not been created, the cosmos would still be governed by God. But that does not necessitate the creation of men and angels as created spirits destined for God, even if it is fitting for them to exist to «round out», as it were, the possible levels of the hierarchy of being.
127. *Ibid.*, 102.
128. ARISTOTLE, *Ethics* iii.3, cited in ST I-II q5 a4 ad 1, in MILBANK, viii.
129. «All is grace», famous quotation of ST THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT JESUS ET DE LA SAINTE-FACE, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Cerf, Paris, 1998, 1009.
130. OAKES, 668.
131. *Ibid.* Oakes here makes a powerful connection between the experience of the nature/supernatural dialectic in the individual and the ecclesial context. The fact that Catholicism holds itself to the fullness of truth and that the true Church of Christ subsists in her (cfr. *Lumen gentium*, 8 and *Dominus Jesus*) is a dogma with which the theologian must engage if he is going to correctly consider the question of nature and grace.
132. *Ibid.*, 672.
133. MILBANK, 39, cited in OAKES, 672.
134. OAKES, 673.
135. *Ibid.*, cfr. MILBANK, 44.
136. MILBANK, 100, cited in OAKES, 675.
137. OAKES, 681.
138. Cfr. D. SCHINDLER, introduction, in H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, Rosemary Sheed and John M. Pepino, trans. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998), xxii-xxiii, which quotes De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church*, 89-90.
139. OAKES, 678.
140. *Ibid.*, 679.
141. H. DE LUBAC, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 54, cited in OAKES, 680.
142. OAKES, 681.
143. OAKES, 681. A third possibility: De Lubac in 1946 did not actually believe in pure nature as Pius XII would later introduce it, but in *Surnaturel* he does not *expressly* state his denial. After *Humani generis*, he was able to reformulate his central thesis in such a way as to include the concept of pure nature as introduced by Pius XII, still excluding any more of a role given to pure nature.
144. *Ibid.*, 687.

145. *Ibid.*, 692.
146. *Ibid.*, 694.
147. *Ibid.*, 693
148. *Ibid.* Could it be suggested that perhaps Radical Orthodoxy's apparent evacuation of the secular and the philosophical from man is just another form of establishing postmodern man as independent of God, when one considers the fact that the nature/grace question necessarily has an ecclesial component. For the Roman Catholic, this component includes the ordering of the human person towards full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Radical Orthodoxy's pretense at a trans-denominational theology refuses to see the question in this terms. Then the question becomes, if the nature/grace dialectic is not ordered to communion with the Roman Catholic Church, and it is not ordered to any form of ecclesial communion, then to what is it ordered? Is man then not ordered back to natural society on his own merits?
149. *Ibid.*, 695.
150. HÜTTER, «Desiderium», 83.
151. *Ibid.*, 84.
152. *Ibid.*, 86.
153. Even though he also notes that Milbank also refers to Maritain as Maintain.
154. *Ibid.*, 89. In this vein Milbank shows himself to be in the line of Komonchak and Kerr. It is interesting to note that the authors chosen for this thesis who attempt to establish a strict association between Thomist theology and so-called reactionary politics are all Anglophones. None of them are French. This is interesting, considering that one would imagine that such a connection would be particularly lucrative as ammunition against Thomism. While Congar, De Lubac, Maritain, and other thinkers such as Charles Journet deplored Garrigou-Lagrange's politics, they did not establish such a strict connection as do the Anglophones cited above.
155. *Ibid.*, 88.
156. *Ibid.*, 90.
157. *Ibid.*, 93.
158. JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, 66, 95-98, cfr. AAS 91 (1999) 5-88, cited in HÜTTER, «Desiderium», 94, note 26.
159. *Ibid.*, 95-6.
160. This also raises the question of the relevance of Milbank's authority as an interpreter of De Lubac. De Lubac and Milbank do not have the same sense of the relationship of the ecclesial vocation of the theologian to the Magisterium. It is as if, for De Lubac, the natural vocation of the theologian is to be suspended in the middle of the supernatural Church as she really is. For Milbank, the theologian exists in kind of a *natura pura* where he may operate entirely independent of any concretely existing ecclesial communion.
161. While it is clear that Milbank claims De Lubac and Bulgakov as his theological inspiration, and that there are clear De Lubacian and Bulgakovian theses in his own theology, Hütter does not explain how Milbank's Delubacianism is specifically Bulgakovian, and how that Bulgakovian declension of De Lubac colors Milbank's interpretation of St Thomas and De Lubac.
162. *Ibid.*, 110.
163. *Ibid.*, 111. Cfr. K. SCHMITZ, *The Gift: Creation*. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), cited in note 62.
164. *Ibid.*, 115.
165. *Ibid.*, 117. St Thomas' idea of predestination, and that of the Catholic theological tradition, is that some are elected for eternal life, while Origen, Bulgakov and Milbank hold that, in the end, all will merit eternal life. For St Thomas on predestination, see ST I q23.
166. *Ibid.*, 131.



167. *Ibidem*.
168. LONG, 1. It should be noted that Long is particularly fond of the use of italics. Quotations from him with italics are from the original, unless otherwise specified.
169. *Ibid.*, 2.
170. *Ibid.*, 3.
171. *Ibid.*, 8.
172. *Ibid.*, 10.
173. *Ibid.*, 11.
174. *Theonomic* derives from the Greek words for God, θεός and law, νόμος. Protestant theologians developed the term in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to describe the theory that God alone is the source of law and ethics in man. Cfr. G. BAHNSEN, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. Nacogdoches, Tx: Covenant Media Press, 1977. In this context, *nature as a theonomic principle* refers to the fact that nature is not an autonomous God-free zone, but must itself be obedient to the law of God. It is a concept widely used in Evangelical and Reformed theology, but not present widely in Roman Catholic theological usage.
175. *Ibidem*.
176. GORIS, 77, claims that St Thomas never spoke of *potentia obedientialis*
177. LONG, 12.
178. *Ibid.*, 17.
179. *Ibid.*, 19.
180. *Ibid.*, 21.
181. *Ibid.* We may add that what Long identifies as contextualization is based on the analogical character of nature and desire. How nature desires depends much on the different situation that nature finds itself in: in pure nature, in created man, in fallen man, and in redeemed man.
182. *Ibid.*, 22.
183. *Ibidem*.
184. *Ibid.*, 23.
185. *Ibid.*, 101.
186. *Ibid.*, 23.
187. *Ibid.*, 25.
188. *Ibid.*, 26-7.
189. *Ibid.*, 27.
190. *Ibid.*, 29. Cfr. DE LUBAC, *Mystery*, 48-9, *Augustinianism*, 292.
191. *Ibidem*.
192. *Ibid.*, 32.
193. *Ibid.*, 35.
194. *Ibid.*, 37.
195. *Ibidem*.
196. *Ibid.*, 43.
197. *Ibid.*, 50.
198. *Ibid.*, 91. Long also claims that his criticism is equally valid for Von Balthasar.
199. *Ibid.*, 106.
200. *Ibid.*, 210.
201. HÜTTER, «Desiderium», 89.
202. HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 525.
203. G. COTTIER, *Le désir de Dieu: Sur les traces de saint Thomas*, Éditions Parole et Silence, Paris, 2002.
204. HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 526.
205. Which explains why Milbank was anxious to cause doubt as to Feingold's exegesis of it.

206. Cfr. W. O'CONNOR, *The Eternal Quest: The Teaching of St Thomas Aquinas on the Natural Desire for God*, Longmann, Green and Co., . New York and London, 1947 and M. J. LE GUILLOU, «Surnaturel», *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 34 (1950) 226. NB the summary of Le Guillou's position on De Lubac figures highly in DONNEAU, *Controversy*, 51-55.
207. HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 528.
208. *Ibid.*, 528-9.
209. *Ibid.*, 529.
210. *Ibid.*, 531.
211. *Ibid.*, 534-5.
212. *Ibid.*, 539.
213. *Ibid.*, 541.
214. COTTIER, *Le désir de Dieu*, 192, cited in HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 541-2.
215. *Ibid.*, 547.
216. Cfr. SCG 22, 2
217. *Ibid.*, 550.
218. *Ibid.*, 555.
219. St. AUGUSTINE, *De quantitate animae* c. 34, in *The Measure of the Soul*, Francis Tourncher, trans. (Philadelphia: The Peter Reilly Company, 1933), 206, cited in HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 555.
220. SCG III, ch. 25, 2, cited in Hütter, «Aquinas», 560.
221. HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 560.
222. *Ibid.*, 563.
223. *Ibidem*.
224. *Ibid.*, 565.
225. *Ibid.*, 566.
226. *Ibid.*, 571.
227. M.J. LE GUILLOU, «Surnaturel», 242, cited in HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 587.
228. HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 588.
229. *Ibid.*, 591.
230. This is a reformulation of the principle enunciated in HÜTTER, «Aquinas», 591.

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